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THE YOUNG COMMANDER.

CHAPTER I.

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TOWARDS the close of the eighteenth century, on the banks of the romantic river Fal, stood a very handsome mansion, of no great antiquity, though built in the style of the residences of the days of "Good Queen Bess."

It had been erected by Sir Hector Claude Tregannon, in the latter end of the reign of George the First, and at the opening of our story, was inhabited by Sir Hector's grandson,

Sir Henry Claude Tregannon, the fifth baronet.

The grounds surrounding the house were remarkably beautiful and extensive, though the prospect from the windows was somewhat circumscribed, the thickly wooded hills on the opposite side of the Fal obstructing the view. To the rear of the mansion, the land was plentifully covered with timber of luxuriant growth and foliage. In front, a beautiful and extensive lawn led to the high rocky banks of the Fal. This stream, which gives its name to the town and harbour of Falmouth, was not a quarter of a mile broad opposite Tregannon House, but the banks on both sides of the river were exceedingly picturesque and beautiful, winding up between lofty hills, covered with wood, till its navigation ended at the town of Truro.

On the opposite side of the river, facing Tregannon House, the country, for several miles, was very thinly inhabited, and at the

period of our story, the nature of the land was extremely wild, thickly covered with timber and low shrubs, with abrupt cliffs, and shallow narrow creeks intersecting it. Below Tregannon House the river Fal emptied itself into a large sheet of water, forming one of the great branches of Falmouth harbour, having St. Just's Creek to the south, Milor Creek to the north, and Carrick Roads, (where all the men-of-war anchored,) to the west, with the town of Falmouth, Pendennis Hill and Castle, forming, altogether, a very beautiful panorama.

The month of May had commenced, and sweet and refreshing as the name of that beautiful month is, yet in the variable climate of Cornwall, May oftentimes assumes the aspect of March. However, on the day our story opens, it chanced to be remarkably balmy and pleasant; the sun shone out bright and cheerful, the light westerly wind playing on the waters of the Fal, causing them to sparkle and

ripple under its rays, in a manner tempting the beholder to embark on its gently flowing tide. The full light fell upon Tregannon House, its noble proportions shewing clearly and well defined, opposed to the dark foliage of the thick wood that covered the hill at the back.

The giant shadows of the great old oaks that bordered the lawn, added to the pleasing effect, while rows of beautiful evergreens and flowering shrubs bordered the winding] walks that were cut round the lawn, down to the very water's edge.

About two o'clock on the day named, the front door of the mansion was thrown open, and two females, with three children came forth, and descending the flight of steps, began traversing the lawn, in the direction of the river, whose waters seen through the vista of trees, sparkling and glistening in the sun light, enticed a nearer approach.

The three children, once on the grass, ran

on before the two females, with all the delight and joyous movements of young people emancipated from restraint. Two of them were girls of seven and nine years of age, the third was a lovely boy, scarcely three. The two females, their attendants, both young women, went on, chatting and laughing, permitting the children to ramble and wander whither they pleased, chasing the early butterfly, tempted abroad by the beauty and warmth of the bright May day.

Crouched behind a thick mass of furze, that stretched along the summit of the bank overhanging the river, were two persons, a male and female, who were eagerly watching the children through an opening in the furze brake.

The man who lay thus concealed was perhaps about thirty years of age. He might have been accounted at one time remarkably handsome; but, at this period, his haggard, wild look was almost ferocious, as his dark eyes and bushy eyebrows were bent with a fearfully

sinister expression upon the three children. Even at his early age there were deep lines beneath the eyes, and round the corners of the mouth, making it very evident that his short life had been passed in vice and dissipation of every sort, for, at a careful glance, it might be discerned, that he was prematurely old. That he had once been a strong, powerful man was evident, from his breadth of shoulder and chest, but now he was thin, almost emaciated. His garments, formerly those of a gentleman, were threadbare, patched and torn in many places. So much for the man who plays no inconsiderable part in this our true story !

The woman by his side was his wife, three years younger, she had once been singularly handsome ; but when introduced to the notice of our readers, was a wretched object to behold. This woman, at five-and-twenty, was a confirmed drunkard. Gin, the bane of the human race, was all she cared for. She was miserably attired ; a fragment of an old shawl

only partly covered her shoulders, and a dirty, torn straw bonnet her head, while the tresses of a once very fine head of hair hung disordered and uncombed over her neck and person.

Such were the two persons concealed behind the furze, watching the movements of the children.

The two servants turned into a shady walk, while the little girls, laughing and shouting, chased their brother on towards the very spot where the strangers lay concealed.

“Up, Jane, up,” said the man, in a low voice to the woman; “now or never!” and with a savage oath, he muttered—“Ah! curse him! I will strike him a blow now he will never recover. Go, woman, crawl down the bank—loosen the boat—I am certain of succeeding this time.”

“So you said ten days ago,” muttered the woman, as she rose, and, with a discontented look, disappeared down the bank.

“Ah!” muttered the man, looking after her

with a fierce expression of countenance, "if she had a gin bottle with her she would not grumble; a few more bottles of that cursed alcohol will finish her. Who would have thought it?"

In the meantime, the children reached to within fifty yards of the man's hiding-place—the two attendants being at a considerable distance.

"Now, Claude," said the eldest girl, "we will have a game of hide and seek."

The man heard those words, and a low chuckle of satisfaction escaped him.

"There, Claude," continued the two girls, placing the little fellow behind a thick, low laurestina, "stay there, and mind, don't look till we hide, and cry, 'Claude!'"

And away they went, laughing and running along between the thick flowery shrubs, till they found a place to their satisfaction to hide in.

The child—and a sweet, lovely child he was

—tried to make a place in the bushes to peep through, and, as he did so, like a deadly snake, the man crawled forth from his cover, with a thick sack in his hands, and the next instant it was over the poor child's head, and a grasp fixed on its little throat, that not only stifled all attempts at a scream, but, also, almost extinguished life. He darted down the bank, just as the shrill cry of "Claude!" rang through the air.

In three minutes the man reached the river's side, where floated a small punt, crazy and old. Into this he got, still holding the half-strangled child.

"Hold him tight, Jane," said the man, handing over the sack with the child to the woman; "not too tight, curse you—do you want to strangle him?"

"Oh!" muttered the woman, with a vile sneer, "he is not to be disposed of then? and I am to have the trouble."

“Hold your tongue, fool,” growled the man, while he sculled the punt rapidly down under the bank, with a falling tide.

A sudden bend in the stream soon hid them from the sight of Tregannon House, and just then a wild cry of alarm rang through the air, and was echoed from the opposite side.

“Ah! shriek away,” exultingly exclaimed the man, urging the boat towards a narrow muddy creek on the other side of the river. Into this he pushed, and then both he and the woman leaped out.

The man, fastening the punt to a stake, pulled out a plug, and pressing it down, it filled and sank.

“Come, walk fast,” he exclaimed, “and give me the boy.”

“I think he’s dead, James,” said the woman, quite unconcernedly.

“No,” said the man, “he’s not dead, but you have half-stifled him.”

“So much the better,” returned the woman, “it will hinder him from crying till we get to the cave.”

This part of the land bordering the river was totally uncultivated and uninhabited, and covered with a wild plantation of stunted oak and low brush-wood, the nearest village, St. Just, being some four miles distant. The poor child was only exhausted, for as the man took him in his arms he began to struggle again; but his cries, before stifled, were now deep, painful sobs.

Forcing their way through the many obstructions in their path, in about ten minutes they reached the base of a steep cliff, a deserted quarry apparently, for a large deep pool of water, with very steep banks, lay at the foot of it. Thrusting aside a thick tuft of brambles and bushes growing out from the side of the cliff, a narrow opening appeared, very probably a deserted and abandoned mine shaft. Into this they entered. Within, it

was wide and spacious, and had the appearance of a large cave.

“Now, hold this boy,” said the man, “till I strike a light.”

The woman took the unfortunate child from the sack. Its violent sobs and tears would have softened any other woman’s heart, save that of an habitual drunkard’s, but they—they possess no heart but for gin. She shook the child roughly, and in a harsh voice threatened to kill it, if it did not cease crying. In the meantime the man struck a light, and then advanced into the cave. It was evidently their place of abode, for various utensils were lying about, a fire-place of stones was erected, heaps of dried fern and rushes were gathered together in one corner, and a large piece of beef, and some dried fish were suspended by a string to a peg driven into a fissure in the side of the rock.

“There, put the child down, Jane,” said the man, “he will cry himself to sleep. At all

events, he may cry till he chokes. No one will hear him here. Light a fire, and let us have something to eat, and here's a cup of gin for you to begin with."

Taking a large bottle and a cup from a hole, he poured out a draught, which he gave the woman, who drank it off eagerly. With a contemptuous and sneering look, the man regarded the thin worn out wretch before him, and then drank a cup-full himself. Taking some dried wood heaped up in the cave, the woman soon lighted a fire, while the man cut slices of beef. A pot of potatoes was put on the fire, and then both sat down to wait till they were boiled. The poor boy, worn out with struggling and crying, sat up on the fern gazing with his large dark eyes upon the wretches before him as if fascinated by some strange power.

"Well," said the woman, "now this job is done, what do you intend to do with the brat?"

It won't do to travel with him, we should be detected at once."

"Do not trouble yourself, Jane," said the man; "my work is not half done. George and his wife will be back to-morrow; you will have no trouble with the boy."

"But he will always stand in our way; even if you succeed, you will always live in terror."

"I will not take a life needlessly," gloomily replied the man. "If I succeed, I will take care the boy never appears again. If I fail, he will be of immense importance to us, and make up for the failure. But talk no more on this subject now, for you cannot guess how things may turn out."

They shortly afterwards ate their meal, and even tried to get the wretched boy also to eat something, but with a passionate gesture he pushed it away, calling out bitterly for his father and his sisters to take him away from those bad people. The woman laughed in

mockery, and turned away, consoling herself with the contents of the black bottle, her husband making no opposition, but not taking more himself than another cup-full, diluted with water.

“You will get drunk, Jane,” said the man, looking at her thin, emaciated face. “If you do, during my absence, you will ruin all.”

“Ah!” said the woman, with a heavy sigh, “it’s only then I enjoy a moment’s happiness—I forget the past.”

“Tut, girl,” interrupted the man, “*forget the past*, and look to the future; it’s far pleasanter.”

The woman shuddered, and did not reply; but she sat with her head buried in her two hands; the man got up and went to the mouth of the cave. It was a dark night, and a light grey mist came up from the river. He then retired within the cave. The child was asleep, and the woman still in the same attitude. The man looked at her for a moment by the light of the miserable candle; some passing thought

crossed his mind, for the fierce, harsh expression of his features softened, and he drew his tall and well-formed figure upright; but the next moment his dark brows met, and he muttered—

“It must be—I have sworn it!”

He stooped down and seized the gin bottle. The woman stirred not. He turned it so as to let it lie over on its side, till the liquor ran out upon the ground.

Lighting another candle, he walked quietly from the cave, leaving both the woman and the child sleeping. Pushing away the mass of brambles from the mouth, he emerged into the open air. It was a mild, beautiful night, with a clear, blue sky above; but a grey mist still lay, as it were, sleeping upon the earth. As he moved quietly through the wood, the sound of a bell came clearly and distinctly to his ear. He counted the strokes; the sound came from some man-of-war in St. Just's Pool.

“Eleven o'clock!” muttered the man; “the

tide will reach the punt in half-an-hour ;” and he moved on faster.

It was not a very easy task to find the path through that entangled wood, but the man pursued his way steadily till he reached the creek. The punt was lying dry on the mud. Lifting it up, he let the water run out, and then put in the plug. By this time, the young flood-tide was running up the creek, and, as the punt required but little water to float it, the man got in, and with the single oar previously fastened in her, sculled out of the creek into the tide.

The mist lay thickly over the river, but the tide ran up strong. He let the boat float up with the stream and listened attentively, to catch any sound, but all was still and calm save that man’s heart, which then beat with every vile passion that can have a place in the human breast. Having reached the opposite side, at nearly the same place from which he had carried off the child, he pushed the boat ashore, and, taking the long rope fastened to the bow,

ascended the bank, and then made fast the cord to a bush. Again he listened, but not a sound was to be heard, save the sighing of the breeze through the lofty trees, or the ripple of the tide against the rocky shores of the Fal. Making his way along the bank, which was no easy task, he arrived at the spot where the unfortunate child had been playing so thought- and merrily in the morning.

He stood by the very tree, and gazed up at the house, but all was dark there. Not a single light was to be seen at any of the windows. He then sat down, and began to commune within himself, thus—

“After the occurrence of this morning there will be some of the servants up to a late hour. Many may not go to bed at all. *He* will not, I feel satisfied. His heart tortured, his brain on fire, will his poisons give him relief now? My time has come, though I have gone through eight long years of misery and degra-

dation—have leagued with the very scum of the earth—”

He paused in his thoughts, passed his broad, thin hand across his brow, and then leaned back against the tree ; and thus he sat till the hour of two, for he heard some clock within the mansion strike distinctly. He had approached very close to the front of the building.

“ I must be cautious,” he muttered. “ He may have procured constable’s from Truro.”

Then creeping forward amid the evergreens he gained a view of the back of the mansion. There were neither stables nor out-houses near the building, but the grounds were formed into shrubberies and gardens, the latter being walled in.

No lights were to be seen, neither was there any sound of life, not even the bark of a dog. This latter sound he knew from experience he would be sure not to hear ; satisfied that all was quiet, and that the inhabitants of the mansion were seemingly buried in repose after the, no

doubt, terrible excitement of the day, he crept back to the east wing, and then climbing over an ornamental fence passed across a flower border and reached the side of the building. He halted at the foot of a magnificent pear tree, which some years back had been trained to cover that side of the house, but growing too strong and large to be confined within bounds it was allowed its liberty. It was a noble tree, and some of its branches still touched the wall, resting against it for support.

Some thirty or more feet from the ground was a window, and up at this window the man beneath gazed anxiously, and then muttered—

“Yes, just as I hoped and wished.” Then buttoning his threadbare coat tightly about him, and leaving his rimless hat on the ground, he began slowly but steadily to mount the tree. Thin and emaciated as he appeared, he was still a strong and active man; with ease he

climbed till he reached a stout branch that rested nearly against the strong stone buttress of the window.

“Now then,” soliloquized this daring robber, for such he might be justly called, “if the window be not fastened my task will be easy. If it be, I must incur the risk.”

Standing on the branch, which bent considerably with his weight, he was able to place his hand on the stone buttress to steady himself. He then drew from beneath his coat a long and strong sharp pointed knife with the blade in a leather case. Inserting this under the sash, he at once ascertained that the window was not fastened inside. Getting then a better and higher position, he leaned cautiously forward and was able to place his hands so as to open the window, then with a little exertion, he raised himself up and got within the room without making the least noise. For several moments he paused and listened but not a sound was to be heard in the house. The

beating of his own heart was almost audible, for even with his most perfect knowledge of the mansion he had thus so easily gained an entrance into, the project he meditated was most daring and hazardous. But this man was one who at that moment valued life only as a secondary consideration. Taking off his shoes, he leaned against the wall of the room, muttering to himself—"Eight years; yes, nearly ten years since I stood within this room. This is not my first entrance by this window, but it will be the last, I feel sure."

For several minutes he remained trying to gain a view over the large chamber he had thus clandestinely entered. It was a kind of lumber-room containing all manner of articles; some of which might puzzle a clever head in thinking what they could have been used for. The room was full, but the faint light from the window threw a strange shadowy form on some of the objects. Divested of his shoes, he picked his way through the lumber

and gained the door. It was, as he expected, locked, but he seemed quite prepared for all kinds of emergencies, and taking from his pocket a bunch of very singular looking skeleton keys, in less than a minute the door was unlocked, and having oiled the hinges with a feather which he drew from a small bottle of oil, it opened without the least noise.

Standing without the door he listened eagerly for a few minutes, but all was still as death in that vast mansion. He was now in one wing of the house, and he had a long way to ramble through the building to gain the principal and usually inhabited parts. Scarcely a ray of light penetrated the long corridor he was traversing, but every inch was familiar to him, and he passed noiselessly along, up and down stairs, along galleries, opening and shutting doors, and avoiding all those parts which he knew were formerly occupied by servants; without impediment the intruder gained the grand staircase and then the principal corridor

where the best sleeping chambers were. In this part of the mansion none of the domestics reposed, except the Baronet's own man, who slept in a room at a short distance from his master's. A communication existed by bell between the Baronet's chamber and his attendant's, for some times the former would sit up whole nights, and often ring for the latter's services. Approaching the Baronet's door, the man paused, and placing his eye to the keyhole saw that there was a light within, but no sound of human life came to his ear, and he again listened for a minute or two, then laying his hand on the lock, he gently turned it. It yielded noiselessly to his touch; he opened the door and fearlessly entered the apartment. He felt he was deadly pale, but his hand did not shake or his purpose falter.

It was a very large, lofty chamber with three windows, and contained one of those immense ponderous beds, with four posts, so heavy and cumbrous in their appearance, and yet withal

so grand and imposing to look at. The whole room was furnished in the magnificent but heavy style of George the Second's time, though the period of our tale is about the latter end of the reign of his successor. Opposite the bed was the fire-place, with a very pure white marble mantel-piece. In the grate, although it was the month of May, there burned a sea-coal fire; at some little distance from the fire was an immense easy-stuffed-chair, and in this chair, reclining back, reposed the strange eccentric but noble hearted Sir Henry Claude Tregannon, attired in deep mourning, with the frills and ruffles of the period.

He was a man rather above the middle height, but extremely thin; his features were beautiful, remarkably so, though the face was deadly pale, but the eyes being closed the general expression could not then be judged of. His head was quite bald, excepting a circle of hair round the back, and that was jet black. One thin white transpar-

ent hand rested on the arm of the chair near to which stood a large table, on which was placed a costly medicine chest, two curious decanters, venetian cut wine glasses, and a splendid gold watch set round with jewels, a minute glass and a purse full of gold, the bright metal shining out through the open net work ; a desk with writing materials and a brace of beautifully finished pistols, on which a bronze lamp of great antiquity with a dark shade over the flame cast a strong light, whilst the rest of the chamber was in comparative obscurity. In a splendid frame over the mantel-piece was the full length portrait of a very lovely boy, apparently about two or three years of age. A sinister smile passed over the intruder's face as his eyes rested on that picture, and he mentally exclaimed—"The blow has struck home." He then advanced close to the table and looked at a cut glass phial that stood beside a wine glass half full of wine. It was labelled laudanum. Another, similar phial, was by its side, on

which was written "prussic acid." "Humpoh!" muttered the man, "still dabbling with his poisons."

Sir Henry uttered a low moan, and moved uneasily.

"Ah! he sleeps from the effect of opium," thought the man. He paused, his eyes resting on the watch and the gold in the purse, but all poverty-stricken as he looked, he neither touched the one nor the other. Even the dressing-table covered with silver utensils and ornaments did not attract a glance, but taking up the phial of prussic acid, he paused a moment in thought, and then took out the curious stopper, and poured into the wine in the glass quite enough to kill a horse on the instant, and then replaced the stopper.

During this proceeding, the Baronet several times moved and moaned, though his eyes remained fast closed; whilst at each movement the man's hand grasped the handle of his long knife. He next approached the desk, and

taking a pen, thought, for a moment, before writing four or five lines in a steady, bold hand, putting at the bottom his name. This paper he placed upon the table, so that, on waking, the Baronet should instantly perceive it. He then retired behind the high back of the great arm-chair, first placing his cold, clammy hand on the head of the uneasily sleeping Baronet.

A shudder like an attack of ague seemed to shake the form of Sir Henry, then his eyes unclosed, and he wildly looked around him.

The paper seemed to catch his attention at once, for he grasped it with a violent, nervous eagerness, and read the lines. The effect appeared appalling—he gasped for breath—trembled in every limb—and with a sudden spasmodic action, seized the glass of wine, and swallowed it, as if to relieve himself from fainting. But the instant the wine passed his lips, with its deadly mixture, he gave a wild

and fearful shriek, and would have seized the bell-rope, but a hand held him down in his chair. The next instant he was a corpse.

Seizing the paper from the hand of the dead man, the murderer thrust it crumpled into his breast pocket, and instantly fled from the room. As he did so, he heard a door in the corridor open, but he fled swiftly, and, in a few minutes, reached the chamber, through which he had entered the house.

Locking the lumber-room door, he resumed his shoes, muttering—

“I did not count upon that fearful shriek ; I thought the poison too deadly for even a murmur to escape his lips. Ha ! by heavens, there goes a bell—there is not a moment to lose.”

Getting out of the window, he dropt on the bough, and, in an instant, gained the foot of the tree, having first carefully closed the window. Picking up his hat, he ran down amongst the evergreens, and gaining the furze

brake, lay down to recover breath. Scarcely five minutes elapsed, and then he heard the gallop of a horse down the broad avenue leading to the principal gate.

“ Good !” muttered the murderer, “ they are expeditious. Shews he kept up the old custom—a horse saddled, and a groom ready, throughout the night, to mount at an instant’s warning. But all the doctors breathing, may look wise, and try their skill. He is gone !”

And, with a terrible laugh, he sprang down the bank, cast off the rope, and entering the punt, let it drop down the river with the falling tide.

CHAPTER II.

At the period of our tale, there resided in a handsome house, on the marine parade at Plymouth, a Mr. Stonehenge, an attorney-at-law. This gentleman had considerable practice, though not always considerable emolument, in a certain branch of his profession, and was generally remarkably fortunate in all the cases he undertook, hence arose the idea of his talent. Fortunate or clever, these two words—how different in their real signification—

sometimes, however, mean the same thing—at least, most part of the human race are inclined to believe that every man successful and fortunate, must be also exceedingly clever, and the possessor of considerable abilities.

Mr. Stonehenge's chief practice lay in our criminal law courts, and always on the part of the criminal or the prosecuted. No matter how deep the guilt of the prisoner—no matter how apparent his crime, Mr. Stonehenge was always ready to defend him, and whether fortunate or clever, it matters not, he more frequently gained his cause than otherwise. Indeed, having succeeded in some rather remarkable criminal cases, he acquired no small degree of fame.

Mr. Stonehenge was not considered a bad kind of man, though he was known to be rather greedy of gain, and having risen from a very low grade, into the position he then held, he was ambitious of rising still higher,

and would not, it was thought, be very particular as to the means employed to gain his ends.

Still he was, outwardly, a very merry, good-natured man amongst his own family, and very fond of his wife and two daughters.

We introduce him to the notice of our readers, some ten or twelve days after the events recorded in our first chapter ; he was sitting at breakfast, with his wife and two daughters, both extremely good-looking girls, respectively of fifteen and eighteen years of age.

Mr. Stonehenge himself was about the middle height, but very stout, with a round full face, light hair, and a pair of sharp, quick, grey eyes ; he was very neat in his person and attire.

Mrs. Stonehenge was rather tall and thin, but with a quiet, agreeable countenance ; dressed well, but not beyond her station or means.

The room the party was breakfasting in,

was a parlour, with a large bow window, looking out on the fair and beautiful bay of Plymouth, with Mount Edgecumbe on the right, and to the left the Start Point. The break-water did not then exist. The bay was covered with shipping, from the stately two-decker, to the tanned sailed barge.

Mr. Stonehenge had just finished two eggs, a round of toast, and a few slices of ham, and feeling correspondingly comfortable, and not being pressed for time, he cast a glance out of the window, and said —

“Now, Rosa, my love, hand me the ‘*Falmouth Packet*,’ and I will read you the news.”

“La, pa,” said Miss Rosa, handing the paper, “there is never anything in that paper but shipping intelligence, and mines discovered, and polytechnic meetings, &c., I never read it.”

“There you are wrong,” returned the father, “*The Packet* is the best local paper in the two counties. I suppose you want a paper full of

the fashions, balls, pic-nics, and a goodly sprinkling of horrible murders."

"Certainly not the last, papa," returned Rosa.

"I think, my dear," said her mother, with a smile, and a knowing look at her husband, "the last named intelligence would suit you best."

"God bless my soul!" suddenly exclaimed the attorney, "here's a most strange and melancholy piece of information! I know all the parties well."

"What is it?" demanded wife and daughter's in one breath.

"Nothing less than the death of Sir Henry Claude Tregannon, by taking an overdose of prussic acid."

"Prussic acid!" exclaimed Mrs. Stonehenge. "Good God, that is poison. What could induce a man to take that for a dose?"

"Ah! he was a strange eccentric man," said the attorney. "It seems his only son

and heir was supposed to be drowned in the Fal: but I will read you the paragraph—it is rather long, but it fully explains this extraordinary affair, as far as it can be explained. I will tell you about the deceased baronet afterwards.”

With a loud “Ahem!” the attorney then read as follows:—

“It is with exceeding regret that we have to record the sudden death of Sir Henry Claude Tregannon, Baronet. This melancholy and most unexpected event occurred on the night after the extraordinary disappearance of the young heir of Tregannon. The unfortunate child, it is supposed, fell into the river, at the bottom of Tregannon lawn, whilst running to hide from his sisters; whether such is the case or not, it is, at present, impossible to say. The Baronet, it appears, retired to his chamber about one o'clock in the morning, after spending many hours with his attendants, in

vainly searching for his lost child, by land and by water. We now quote the account of the Baronet's death, given by Mr. Philip's, the deceased personal attendant, in his examination before the coroner.

“The late Sir Henry suffered from a very severe and troublesome cough. To relieve this, he took prussic acid, of course in very minute doses. He also frequently took opium to induce sleep, and oftentimes sat up all night, suffering less in that position from his cough than while lying down.

“That night Sir Henry retired to his room in a terribly distressed state of mind, declined going to bed, and dismissed Mr. Philips, saying he would summon him if he required anything.

“The Baronet's attendant slept in the same corridor, and a bell communicated from his master's room.

Mr. Philips added—

“He retired to bed about half-past one, but did not undress. Merely threw off his coat,

and lay down ; for he felt distressed at seeing Sir Henry suffer so. He was not certain whether he fell asleep or not. He might have been dosing, when a most piercing shriek caused him to leap, stupified from his bed. He paused a moment, and then snatching up the night-lamp that always burned in his room, rushed out into the corridor, and proceeded to his master's door. The two young ladies and their governess slept in the same corridor—they also heard the shriek, and hastily dressing, came out pale and terrified. Miss Pritchard, the governess, said the shriek came from the Baronet's room. Mr. Philips then opened the chamber door and entered. All was perfectly still, the lamp was burning on the table, and nothing seemed disturbed ; but on advancing to the chair, he beheld his master lying back against it. He uttered a cry of alarm, for he saw at once that Sir Henry Tregannon was dead. Miss Pritchard pulled the bell frantically, hurried the two appalled chil-

dren back to their room, and then fainted. Mr. Philips ordered one of the terrified servants, who came up half-dressed, to run to the stables, and direct the groom to mount and ride with the greatest possible speed to Truro for the family physician, although he knew life was quite extinct. Till his arrival, he ordered the door to be closed, and nothing to be touched."

In less than two hours Doctor Plumtre arrived ; of course all he could say on the subject was, that Sir Henry Claude Tregannon died from an over dose of prussic acid, which no doubt the unfortunate Baronet took by mistake, during a state of excessive excitement of mind, arising partly from a naturally nervous temperament and great distraction of mind from the loss of his only son. The verdict of the coroner's jury was therefore to that effect."

After reading this long paragraph, Mr. Stonehenge put down the paper, and looked remarkably thoughtful.

“What a vastly melancholy affair altogether,” said Mrs. Stonehenge. “Father and son both dead, at least they suppose the poor child is drowned. What else could have become of him?”

“He might, mamma,” said the youngest daughter, “be stolen by gipsies for the sake of his clothes, or for the purpose of gaining a large reward afterwards.”

“But,” said Mrs. Stonehenge to her husband, who seemed to be in a reverie, “who succeeds to the great property of Tregannon? The daughters cannot inherit the estate, for I heard you say that some time ago, and something is running in my head about some person or other you once got acquitted for some crime, whose name was Tregannon, or very like it.”

“By Jove, you are right, Mary—quite right; I was thinking of that very individual, and most extraordinary to say, that very man who stood in the dock at Bodmin, within an ace of being condemned to death as a forger, is now,

if the child is dead, unquestionably the next in succession to the title and estate of Tregannon, a rental of full fourteen thousand pounds a year."

"Good gracious!" exclaimed the young ladies, "a forger become a baronet! How horrible!"

"You forget, my dears," said the attorney, rather seriously, "he was acquitted, and therefore innocent."

"But," said Mrs. Stonehenge, "I remember you said at the time, you only saved him through some informality, or quibble, or something."

"It does not signify," returned Mr. Stonehenge, a little sharply, "what it was, the law declared him not guilty, therefore he has a right to be considered an innocent man."

"I know you are quite right, my dear," said Mrs. Stonehenge, meekly. "I never heard the whole affair."

"Do, papa, if you have time, tell us all about

it, and what kind of man the late Sir Henry was—we have heard such strange things said of him.”

“Well, I do not mind indulging you,” said the attorney, who always enjoyed to a certain degree, the pleasure of hearing himself talk. “Sir Henry Claude Tregannon and his brother James Walpole, were twin children; but the late Sir Henry had the good fortune to get the start of his brother into this world, full two minutes. This lucky advance into life constituted him the heir of the Tregannon estate. Now, though he was the first born, it did not turn out that he was the strongest. On the contrary, he was, though a singularly handsome child, weak and puny, while his brother James was a strong, lusty boy. And as they were born, so they grew up. The late Sir Henry was about four-and-twenty when he succeeded to the title and property. His brother was in the army, and said to be a most extravagant, dissipated young man, who,

in few years, spent a large fortune, and then married a woman much beneath him. Sir Henry was a remarkably studious and retiring man, fond of chemistry to excess, exceedingly nervous, and took to dosing himself and dabbling in poisons. At the age of thirty or so he married a young lady, highly connected, with a large fortune, which was, I understood, settled upon any progeny they might have. Though Sir Henry was of a weak, delicate frame, still, as I said, his features were beautiful, and his person, though slight, remarkably elegant. I speak from my own observation, for I not only saw him during the trial of James Tregannon, but several times after.

“ His first child; a boy, died in infancy. This irritated him, for he longed for an heir, as the estate of Tregannon was strictly entailed. His second child was a girl. About this period, I believe it was, that he was bitten by a mad dog—at least, they said it was mad—and it was shot before they clearly ascertained whether it was

afflicted with hydrophobia. Thus the Baronet remained under the impression that he had been bitten by a rabid animal, which affected his already nervous temperament, and made him infinitely worse. He was greatly beloved by his numerous tenantry, and by all those about him, being exceedingly humane and kind-hearted. He took an invincible dislike to all dogs, and consequently they were all banished from his immediate vicinity.

“A strange fatality seemed to hang over the Baronet and his family. His wife and brother died nearly at the same period—the latter leaving an orphan boy, about fourteen years of age, totally unprovided for. Sir Henry sent for the boy, and installed him at Tregannon. I can tell you nothing about him at that time, except from vague reports. I only knew from the man himself, that his uncle sent him to a public school in England, and that he returned to Tregannon at the age of eighteen. Just before this, the Baronet received into his esta-

blishment a young lady, the orphan daughter of a Cornish clergyman, with whom he had formerly been very intimate, both at Oxford and afterwards. She was said to be a very beautiful, talented, and accomplished girl. She became the governess of Miss Tregannon. James Tregannon, at the age of twenty, was accounted a handsome man, and was tall and strongly built. I first heard of him as being concerned in some swindling transaction at the races at Exeter. I was there, but the case was hushed up. He kept race-horses unknown to his uncle, betted and played high, frequented low places kept depraved society, and was enormously in debt; but being considered his uncle's heir, he succeeded in pacifying his creditors.

“I believe it was about this time that he actually married a young woman of specious appearance, but of a notoriously bad character. At last his uncle found out his pursuits, and the mad act he had committed, and also ascer-

tained that his debts were immense. He at once told him he must go abroad.

“James Tregannon did not inform me of all the particulars of this interview; but he said it was a stormy one, and that he accused his uncle of retaining the really amiable Miss Temple as his mistress, which gross and false accusation drove the Baronet wild, and induced him to do at once what he really wished to do before, and this was to offer his hand to Miss Temple. He banished his nephew from Tregannon, allowing him a handsome annuity as long as he conducted himself well, and immediately afterwards married Miss Temple. Again the Baronet became a father, and again a girl was born. It was at this time that James Tregannon committed two forgeries, one for six thousand pounds, and the other for two thousand, forging his uncle's name to two separate cheques, in each instance obtaining the money. On the point of embarking

with his wife for America, he was arrested with nearly the whole sum on his person in drafts or cheques upon the mercantile houses in New York. He was finally lodged in Bodmin Jail, to stand his trial at the assizes. I undertook his defence. His uncle, the Baronet, was resolved not to be turned from his stern purpose, as he had acknowledged that the bills and cheques were forgeries. It was said, and I believe such a report was founded in fact, that Sir Henry, who had immense interest in a high quarter, intended to get his nephew's sentence of death (for there is no doubt but that he would have been condemned) changed into transportation; seeing it was utterly hopeless to look for a change in his terrible career. Of course I had many interviews with this strange man, who seemed not at all to feel his awful situation, for at that time I saw no hopes of saving him. So far, his uncle, however, acted fairly; for he left him ample funds to pay the expenses of his defence.

“ I found by his own confession, there were many other charges against him besides the forgeries, but they were not brought forward, I suppose, seeing that the charge against him was too palpable to be got over. Through an extraordinary blunder in the indictment, and which I eagerly took advantage of, James Tregannon was acquitted, and before others could arrest him, he disappeared, and from that time to this I have heard nothing of him. I was, however, amply remunerated, and acquired considerable credit for the discovery of the blunder of the prosecuting attorney.

“ With respect to Sir Henry, I only know from report that he lived most happily with the amiable woman he had married. She bore him three children, two girls and a boy, but unhappily died in giving birth to the latter. This blow completely shattered the nerves and constitution of the Baronet. And thus, girls, the case stands. Now, Rosa, there’s a capital beginning for a novel—eh !”

“Yes,” returned Miss Rose, “provided you made out that the child had been stolen by his bad cousin, James Tregannon, and that he came to his rights again.”

Mr. Stonehenge gave a slight start, looked into the serious face of his daughter, and then said—

“Very strange!” He then got up, and went down to his office.

“Well, all this is a very melancholy and strange affair,” said Mrs. Stonehenge to her daughters. “I should not at all wonder but that this James Tregannon will again show himself, when he hears of his uncle’s death, and the loss of the heir.”

“But father said,” remarked the elder girl, “that there were other serious charges against him.”

“Fourteen thousand a year, my dear,” said Mrs. Stonehenge, with a smile, “will have a very soothing effect with creditors.”

“Well, for my part,” said Rosa, who was very romantic, and very good-natured—“in my heart I trust the dear little boy was stolen, and not drowned.”

CHAPTER III.

SOME four or five weeks after the events of our last chapter, Mr. Stonehenge was sitting writing in his private office, when his man-servant put his head into the room, saying—

“There is a man at the door, who wishes particularly to see you, sir.”

“Then why not show him in, John?”

“Why, sir, he looks so remarkably shabby.”

“That does not signify, John,” returned the attorney. You know I sometimes get queer customers.”

“ True, sir,” replied John, with a smile, and in a few seconds he ushered in a tall man, who entered with an easy, unembarrassed air. John closed the door, and Mr. Stonehenge put down his pen and looked up in the face of his visitor. As he did so, he felt himself turn pale, and then red, while he leaned back in his chair with an exclamation of—

“ God bless me ! Mr. James Tregannon.”

“ Sir James Walpole Tregannon, I hope,” very coolly returned the visitor, taking a chair and seating himself. “ I am glad, Mr. Stonehenge, that you remember me.”

“ Perfectly,” returned the attorney ; “ perfectly !” his mind impressed with a hundred visions of sudden greatness to be achieved through the instrumentality of his quondam client, whom our readers will at once recognise as the abductor of the unfortunate heir of Tregannon. In outward appearance he was by no means improved. The same tattered and miserable attire and rimless hat—his features even

more cadaverous and worn. The only alteration was in his manner; he carried himself more erect, and his voice and action appeared almost insolent and audacious.

“ Well, Mr. Stonehenge,” began James Tregannon, after a short pause, “ we meet again after a separation of nearly nine years. You see I am not improved in personal appearance,” and he cast his battered hat from him with a gesture of contempt, adding, “ I have suffered much, Mr. Stonehenge, from my uncle’s unrelenting persecution of me. I wrote to him after that trial at Bodmin, stating that if he would give me six thousand pounds I would quit the country for ever. He took no notice of my letter; I wrote him a second, and gave way to the resentment I felt, and told him I would inherit Tregannon in spite of him. Well, for once fortune has stood my friend; I see by the papers that he poisoned himself, and that his son was drowned.”

Mr. Stonehenge’s eyes met those of the

speaker with a strange, enquiring gaze, but James Tregannon bore the glance with a look of perfect self-possession.

“I see,” said Mr. Stonehenge, after a moment’s consideration, and in a very conciliating tone, “I see you have suffered much; but if this child should turn up ——”

“Turn up,” interrupted James Tregannon; “oh, then you have not read this morning’s paper?”

“Singular to say, I only read the leading article; but what paper do you refer to?”

“The *Falmouth Packet*,” returned James Tregannon.

“I only saw the *Times*, and read the leading article on the state of France. What is the article you refer to?—has it reference to the unfortunate child of the deceased Baronet?”

“Precisely so; the body has been found.”

Mr. Stonehenge turned very pale, and fidgeted on his chair.

“It seems,” coolly continued James Tre-

gannon, "that the boy must have fallen into the water, for the body was found in a hole some miles down the river, fast in a fishing weir, the face and body much mutilated by the action of the tide beating it against the rocks; but the garments were all recognised, and indeed the body also, the paper says, by the governess, and several domestics of my deceased uncle—and was buried with all due honour," he added, with a sneer; "so, my dear friend; for such I must always consider you, after the valuable service you rendered me some years ago; there will be no difficulty in proving my rights, for, in the first place, the estate of Tregannon is strictly entailed, and even if the late Baronet left a will, it would not affect my rights to the title and property."

"Such is the fact," said the Attorney; "but is there nothing—pardon me if I seem inquisitive—is there anything you yourself—"

"Stay," interrupted James Tregannon, "let

us come to clear understanding. You, perhaps, saved my life; I feel, therefore, under some obligation to you, and preferred coming to you to any other in your profession. Let us make it a matter of business at once. Now, I make you this offer—put me in full possession of my rights, and the day I am acknowledged Sir James Tregannon and possessor of the Tregannon estates, I will bind myself to pay you the sum of five thousand pounds, and constitute you my agent over the property. You may reside in the mansion, if you desire it; as I intend going abroad for some years.”

“You have,” eagerly replied Mr. Storehenge, “made a handsome offer; now, to earn this sum and put you in possession, I must fully know how you are situated. I am aware that you have heavy debts; they can be settled. But there is something else, is there not?”

“Unquestionably there is,” replied Mr. Tregannon, “some six months before I was arrested for those forgeries—you see, Mr.

Stonehenge, I speak without reserve—I was intimately acquainted with a Mr. St. Leger, a young man of large property, who was about to visit the East—he was passionately fond of horses and horse-racing, and played high—he won some hundreds from me; however, to come to the point, I put his name to a cheque, and received two thousand five hundred pounds from his bankers, Messrs. B—— and D——, of London.”

Mr. Stonehenge for a moment looked blank, but James Tregannon continued—

“I should have been prosecuted for this act, had I not been arrested for the other forgery, and before they could take steps to secure me, I got out of the way. Now, though this seems a bad business, to a clever man like you it will not be so.”

“I do not know that,” said Mr. Stonehenge thoughtfully.

“But I will shew you how you can easily

get over it, previously to asserting my rights," said James Tregannon.

"Very good," said the Attorney, "I am listening."

And thinking also, he might have said.

"Mr. St. Leger is a ruined man; he has dissipated a noble fortune, and is at this moment in a mean lodging in London, hiding from his creditors. Three thousand or five thousand pounds will settle that affair; you know how to go about it."

The Attorney remained several moments buried in deep thought, and then, looking up more cheerfully, said, rubbing his hands—

"Yes, I think I can; I am intimately acquainted with the firm of B — and D——. Is there anything else?"

James Tregannon hesitated—that hesitation led to ruinous consequences afterwards.

"No," said he, "there is nothing else that can affect my assuming my title and rights."

“Do you know what property goes to the late baronet’s daughter?” questioned the Attorney. “Miss Tregannon, who married Sir Charles Treacastle some three years ago, inherited her mother’s property—the other two girls were provided for, I believe, in a clause in the late baronet’s marriage settlement, when he married Miss Temple. He must have left some considerable property in money and otherwise,” remarked Mr. Stonehenge, thoughtfully, “if there is no will you will inherit this also.”

“Well, the sooner you set about your enquiries, &c., the better for me and yourself.”

“Certainly. I will lose no time,” said Mr. Stonehenge. “To-morrow, at this hour, I will have a proper document drawn up for you to sign—business is business, you know, Mr. Tregannon.”

“Undoubtedly,” returned the future baronet; “but, in the meantime, I am reduced to great want, and my wife is ill. I am under an as-

sumed name, and I want, as you may perceive, a better outfit. Let me have, therefore, a few pounds."

"Certainly," said the Attorney; "indeed, I regret that you are placed in such a position; but, I think, for a week or so, you had better keep close."

Opening his desk, he took out three ten-pound notes, and handed them over to James Tregannon, who eagerly took them, saying, as he thrust them crumpled into the dilapidated breast-pocket of his coat—

"This will do—I will make myself more respectable in appearance before this time tomorrow."

He rose as he spoke, and, in drawing his hand out of his pocket, he drew the lining with it—laughing, he was putting it back, not observing that in doing so, a crumpled paper fell from under the lining of the pocket. Though this escaped the eyes of James Tregannon, it did not the sharp, keen observation of

the Attorney, who said not a word, but rose up and accompanied his visitor to the door, without requiring the assistance of his man John.

As soon as the door closed upon Mr. James Tregannon, Mr. Stonehenge returned to his study, and, stooping down, picked up the crumpled piece of paper. If he knew how many anxious hours of torture and suspense—of fear and vexation the loss of that crumpled paper caused James Tregannon, he would have felt a kind of awe in lifting it from the floor, but Mr. Stonehenge had acted not merely from curiosity, but from a desire to gain, by any means, some insight into his old client's past life. He thought the paper might be a letter, might disclose some particulars that would perhaps be useful to him in his future proceedings; at all events, the lawyer was not scrupulous, we must confess.

Mr. Stonehenge therefore carelessly picked up the paper, and putting it on his desk, smoothed it out—it was written on both sides

—he then cast his glance upon the four or five lines it contained. As he read, he felt himself grow faint, for he comprehended all—and, sinking back into his chair, he looked like a man felled by some terrible blow; he remained thus for several minutes, gazing upon vacancy, although his mind was fully employed.

Suddenly he got up, locked the door, and taking the piece of paper that caused him so much emotion, he folded it carefully, enclosed it in a sheet of paper—lighting a taper, he sealed the packet, and wrote on the back—“Document received from James Walpole Tregannon, July the 3rd, 178—. He then opened a small highly finished iron casket, with a very peculiar lock—in this casket he placed the packet, locked it, and putting the key into his pocket, sat down, and, for nearly an hour, remained buried in profound thought.

Starting up, with a heightened colour, he muttered, half aloud—

“No, I should be a fool to do so; I will not cast away fortune thus thrown into my very hands.”

And ringing his bell, desired John to go to the back office and summon Mr. Gilmour, his head clerk, to attend him.

We must now follow the footsteps of James Tregannon. When the door of the Attorney's house closed upon him, he moved on a pace or two, and then paused, and, turning round, looked up at the windows; his eyes, as he did so, rested upon the face of a tall, handsome girl, standing at the open window, looking out upon the glorious bay; but, seeing the tall, shabbily-dressed individual looking up, she, for an instant, let her eyes rest upon his face; having done so, she started back from the window, with a flush upon her cheek, she hardly knew why.

“Humph!” muttered James Tregannon, “a handsome girl—old Stonehenge's daughter, no doubt.”

He passed on, and descending a flight of steps, entered one of the most bustling streets of the town; going into a spirit store, he purchased a bottle of port wine and one of brandy. He next entered an apothecary's, and procured some ether and hartshorne, and some tonic mixture, and laden with these purchases he proceeded into that quarter of the town mostly inhabited by the poor and needy. In truth, it was a dreary looking locality. He passed on his way, and dirty and miserable in appearance were the habitations. At length he stopped before a mean looking house, of two stories, a lodging-house, where poor wanderers and travellers were accommodated with a bed for two pence a-night, or a room for two shillings a-week. At the door of this house, with the fragment of a mop in her hand, a dirty cap, with a soiled piece of blue ribbon as an ornament on her head, stood a middle-aged woman, resting her mop on the ground, she eyed her lodger, and the bundles

he carried under his arm, with, a keen inquisitive look.

“ Well, Smith, it’s to be hoped you have gotten enough to pay for your week’s lodging. Your wife’s bad, I can tell you, and I can’t keep lodgings for trampers unless as how they pays for ’em—mine aint a tramper’s inn.”

“ Curse you and your filthy house,” fiercely interrupted James Tregannon, at the same time tossing a five shilling piece at the woman’s feet ; and pushing her aside, went into the house, mounted a most crazy flight of stairs, and entered a miserably-furnished room. A low bed, with patched and soiled quilt, a deal table, two ricketty chairs, and a triangular piece of looking-glass stuck against the bare wall, constituted the furniture of this apartment, and on that wretched bed lay the wife of James Walpole Tregannon, the man who, in a few short weeks, was to possess a title and fourteen thousand a year.

We said, on the bed lay his wretched wife,

she was dying—dying fast, from vice, from misery, from drink—she was fearfully emaciated—the eyes sunk—the forehead damp with perspiration, and the thin colourless lips drawn tight across teeth that once were unrivalled for beauty. The glassy eyes turned upon her husband as he entered, and his were bent upon hers, he gave a slight start, for, at a glance, he saw that the fell destroyer—death, was there. Did that man of crime, that man of an iron heart, feel no pang as he looked into that once fair face, then so ghastly and so wan. Did no remorse strike his soul, no thought of the future appal his mind and make him tremble for the hour when he should feel the destroyer's hand pressed upon himself. Outwardly, he showed no symptoms, but the heart is not so easily read as the features. He approached the bed, saying :—

“ Well Jane, I have good news for you, and bring you something to cheer your heart, I shall soon get you well now.”

And he commenced drawing the cork from the port wine bottle.

“James,” murmured the unfortunate woman, in a low, mournful voice, “James, I am dying ! Oh, my God, bring me a clergyman.”

“Tut, nonsense,” sharply returned James Tregannon, “you are weak for want of good food, take this cup of wine, it will revive you and give you spirits.”

The miserable woman eagerly held out her emaciated hand, and though, as she carried the cup to her lips, it shook fearfully, she drank it down ; it seemed instantly to revive her, for she tried to raise herself a little, and a faint flush came into her pale cheek.

“Ah, did I not tell you so, my poor girl, so you are better now, another cup will enable you to sit up.”

And he held a full one to her.

“Yes, it warms me,” she murmured, “and yet my breath—”

She drank the second cup and then fell back.

The words, "my God," were murmured. She raised her hand wildly, and then, with a short struggle, breathed her last sigh—she was dead.

James Tregannon, this time, did shudder, as, in a loud voice, he called upon the woman of the house.

The woman came coolly and unconcernedly into the chamber of death, and as she cast her eyes upon the bed said—

"Ah, you let her take too much at a time, not indeed that she could have lived beyond a few hours."

James Tregannon, this man of crime and infamy, stood, for a moment, as if some portion of feeling still remained in his obdurate heart. His eyes were fixed upon the face of her, who, whatever had been her vices and crimes, had clung to him through years of degradation and misery. Memory, for a moment, was busy in the brain of the wretched husband, and visions of the past recalled the face, at that moment

so ghastly and terrible to look upon, once fair and beautiful; but, alas, it was beauty only of face and form, for the heart, from very early youth, was corrupt to the very core. Latterly, he had become rough, and, at times, almost brutal in his conduct towards her, which caused her to try and bury her recollections of the past in drink, and to this besetting sin she gave way, till it killed her.

Poverty, abject poverty, is a hard task-master. The good and pious bear it with resignation, and die, looking further than the grave for their reward. The vicious and depraved are driven by it into greater crime, and too often die, cursing only their ill fortune, and with no thought of the future.

“Well, Smith,” said the woman of the house, looking as unconcernedly upon the corpse as upon a dead kitten, “have you money enough to bury her?—if not, you must apply ——”

“Silence, woman,” savagely interrupted James Tregannon, rousing from his reverie.

Putting his hand into his pocket, he took out five guineas and threw them on the table. The woman's eyes glistened as they became fixed upon the gold, which had for her the power of the rattlesnake—it fascinated her.

“There, woman, is money; order what is necessary, and let her be buried in the church of this parish. If you want more money you shall have it—let all be decently done.”

The woman looked at him with astonishment depicted in her countenance.

“You may depend, Mr. Smith, she shall be decently laid out, and I'll go instantly for Mrs. Jones.”

“Do so,” impatiently interrupted James Tregannon, and taking up his hat, he walked out.

“I think's as how he's been a gentleman once, and p'raps he's got some of his money again,” said the woman; “well, I'll go and fetch my crony, and we'll have a drop of this wine anyhow.”

Filling herself out a cup-full, she looked round the room, and then at the corpse.

“ Ah !” she muttered, “ its good wine, but she was too far gone.”

James Tregannon did not return till dusk, and then the woman of the house looked at him with considerable surprise and no little increased respect ; for he was now attired in an entire suit of mourning, a new hat, etc., and whether it was the dress or a change of manner that made so vast a difference, but both herself and Mrs. Jones (they both smelt strongly of brandy) appeared confounded, dropping curtsy after curtsy as he entered the house—but not the chamber of the dead. He paused at the foot of the stairs, and to the infinite amazement of the two women, gave his landlady five guineas more, saying—

“ I shall return to-morrow. Let everything be ready by the day after ;” and without another word, he left the house.

CHAPTER V.

WE commenced our tale in the county of Cornwall—we begin this chapter in the county of Dorset, in the latter part of a very cold October, some four years, or rather more, from the time that our story opened. Six or seven miles from Axminster, and four or five from the romantically situated, but then insignificant village of Charmouth, is an extensive, at least it was in 178—, tract of uncultivated land—in fact, a common or moor, without a single habitation on it. On the north it was bounded

by some well-cultivated land; on the south by the high and picturesque hills above Charmouth. It was about three o'clock in the afternoon, and a cold cutting east wind swept across the moor, on which nothing grew, if we except patches of parched grass, some tall ferns, and low furze bushes.

There were two deep hollows or dells, some distance one from the other, that stretched across the moor in a zigzag direction; down in these dells the grass was of a fresher colour, and a few wild flowers and wild strawberries in the season flourished under shelter from the cold winds.

At the bottom of one of these dells, was a low tent, or rather a large old sail spread over some hoops, and pegged to the ground; a very sombre looking donkey was standing near this tent; his long ears bent back and his head drooping; he looked as if he were sleeping or lulied in profound thought, from which he suddenly roused himself, from some unknown cause,

and pricking up his ears, all at once, broke out into one of those terribly prolonged brayings, so utterly at variance with the harmony of sound, that it brought its owner out from beneath the tent, with a stout stick in his hand, with which he commenced belabouring the unfortunate musician with might and main; thereby proving whatever his profession might be, that he was not an admirer of unearthly sounds. Neither liking the blows or the curses he received, this most useful, but in general most ill-used animal, got out of the way as fast as he could. The man then climbed to the summit of the dell, and cast a glance across the moor towards Charmouth.

The person who had thus rudely evinced his dislike to discordant sounds, was a tall powerful man, of some three or four and thirty years, his face, at least, all you could see of it, for though the rage for beards did not then exist as at present, was nearly hidden in a mass of black whiskers and beard; therest of his features were concealed by a thick coat of either soot

or some other equally efficacious substance for darkening the complexion. His features were well formed, though what with the beard and the soot, and the bushy eyebrows, he had a most savage appearance. He was evidently a travelling tinker, wore a greasy leather apron, an equally unsightly cap, and thick leather gaiters. Putting his hands before his eyes he looked across the moor.

“Ha!” he muttered, “the imp! he’s coming at last. I’ll teach him to be nimble, before I’ve done with him. Confound him, I have had a lot of trouble and risk with him, and no pay as yet; but I will not stand this much longer, for I must get out of this country.”

As he muttered these words, a young boy about seven years old was seen running across the common towards him with something under his arm. The boy was miserably clad, and mirerably thin, and yet it was impossible, notwithstanding his bare feet, tattered garments,

and sooty coloured skin, not to be struck with his little figure, the singular beauty of his features, and the glossy dark brown curls, that clustered round his head and down on his shoulders, for covering on the head he had none. The poor boy had a large bottle under one arm and a brown paper parcel under the other. He looked up as he approached the man with his large bright hazel eyes. He could see by the dark scowl on his face, that a storm was brewing, in fact, ready to burst upon his head, yet he came up close to him without a show of fear, and handed the bottle and the parcel.

“You cursed lazy young hound, three hours going scarcely nine miles,” fiercely exclaimed the tall ruffian. “Take that, and let it teach you to stir your stumps another time.”

And with the back of his hand the brute struck the child a blow across the face, that tumbled him over on the ground and caused the blood to flow in a torrent from his nostrils.

The child rose up without a cry or a tear, though he staggered from weakness. The man's countenance underwent a strange change; he looked at the child, and muttered :

“What a cursed brute I'm growing.”

And taking a piece of coarse bread from his pocket, gave it to the silent sufferer, who was wiping the blood and soot from his face, thereby leaving his fair soft complexion to be seen in contrast with the rest of his soiled skin.

“Did you see Bill?” demanded the man.

“Yes,” returned the boy. “He is coming across the moor.”

“Well, go look after the donkey, and don't come back till sun-set.”

So saying the man descended into the hollow and dived beneath the tent.

The child stood for a moment, with the coarse lump of bread in his hand. He had not eaten anything that day. The tears came into his eyes as he gazed wistfully across the common; the cutting wind, piercing through

his thin and miserable garments. Young as he was, misery and ill-treatment had acted upon him like years, the child thought and reflected like a boy of ten or twelve years old.

“I will run away,” he murmured. “I heard them say I am not their child. I never thought I was. I must have dreamed that I once was in a fine house, for I see it always when I shut my eyes, and had a papa—or I dreamed that too.”

As he spoke, he saw the form of a man coming across the moor. “That is that brute Bill,” he muttered with a sigh, and then plunged into the hollow, and hiding himself behind a furze, he watched the man, Bill, a tinker also in appearance, as he entered beneath the awning, and then creeping cautiously and noiselessly forward, he got quite close to the back of the tent, and putting his ear to a split in the canvass, listened eagerly for nearly a quarter-of-an-hour; he then crawled as cautiously away, till he had placed some furze

bushes between him and the tent. Getting upon his legs, he climbed up the bank, ran swiftly across the moor till he reached the other dell; into this he plunged.

It was now nearly three o'clock. Along this winding hollow the child continued to run for more than a mile and a half, till he reached a cross road. There were still three miles of common, or rather hollow patches of ground; some signs of cultivation, however, and a few scattered farm houses, and several flocks of sheep feeding on the short but sweet pasturage. The boy looked about him, and saw a shepherd, and a curly-hairy-looking dog without a tail, sitting on the side of a bank near him, eating a huge slice of cheese and bread, and the dog, eying him with considerable anxiety. The boy walked up to the shepherd, notwithstanding that the dog without the tail made a rush at him—but the child stood his ground, and the shepherd called back his dog.

“Please, sir,” said the boy, “how many miles be it to Bridport?”

“Well, my little lad, it be nigh seven; be ye going there?”

“Yes, sir, I be; and does yon cross road lead into the great road, the one where the coaches do go to Lyme on?”

“That be the very road, lad; but, stay a bit, and take a piece of this cheese. It will do you good, my lad.”

And so saying, the man, good naturedly, cut off a huge slice of bread and cheese, which he handed to the boy, who, with tears in his eyes, thanking the shepherd from his little heart, pursued his way along the cross road, till a fine clear spring of water running into a pool attracted his attention. Here he sat down, ate his bread and cheese, and, after drinking of the clear, pure water, proceeded to wash and cleanse his face, neck, and hands, a proceeding he dared not venture upon when with

the tinker and his wife, under the fear of a terrible beating.

Without soap, it was not very easy to get off the thick coat of soot and stain rubbed on his face and neck, but he marvellously improved the appearance of his features.

By this time, the sun was setting, but from where he stood, he could plainly perceive, in the vale below, the town of Bridport, with the river Brit running through the vale, and by the town, and rising up against the darkening sky, the square tower of St. Mary's. Before him, also, was the turnpike road from Bridport to Lyme Regis and Axminster.

Looking about him, in search of a sheltered place, from which he could clearly observe everything that passed, he saw a low broken wall, with a thick covering of ivy, and through the broken gaps he could watch the road. Having ensconced himself to his liking he lay down, and, with patient perseverance, kept watching everything that passed on the road.

A few labourers, several carts, a waggon or so passed, before it became dark ; these did not attract the boy's attention. Presently the stars shone out clear and bright, and the cold increased, still the young child watched ; anon the tramp of horses and the roll of wheels reached his ear, coming up the steep hill from the town, and then the lamps of a stage coach caught his attention, and the heavy six-inside stage coach from Dorchester, through Lyme Regis to Axminster came slowly along, the horses encircled in a mist, from their own backs, and the stout coachman encouraging them with whip and voice. The top of the hill gained, the coachman coaxed his steeds into a trot, and they vanished from the sight of the lonely child.

Gentle reader, we must, for a few pages, leave the poor boy to his solitary watch, and follow the Dorchester stage in its journey to Lyme Regis.

Inside were stowed—we say stowed—be-

cause, in sooth, the interior of the old coach, notwithstanding its ponderosity, was little calculated to hold the six individuals it held that night. With their backs to the horses, occupying the corners, were two worthy and remarkably stout spinsters, on the wrong side of forty, both respectable lodging-house-keepers at Lyme Regis. In fact, the seat was well filled by them alone, but, unfortunately, just as the coach was starting from Bridport, the wife of the principal butcher at Axminster became a candidate for the sixth seat, which was between the two spinsters.

Fortunately the horses had their backs to this new passenger, or they must have felt horrified, for good Mrs. Jos Burfat was the stoutest woman in Dorsetshire, and that's saying much ; she acknowledged to eighteen stone, and the said jolly lady, with a basket and a bundle, which she would, on no account, let out of her hands, forced her way in at the door, with the aid of the stout coachman, who put

his back against hers to assist her ascent, and forthwith dropped her between the two unfortunate spinsters ; whether she reached the seat, or supported herself on the hips of the two corners, we know not, but a deep groan issued from their lips, as Mrs. Jos Burfat, who seemed quite comfortable, said, in a bland, oily tone of voice—

“ I hope I doesnt *hincommode* you, ma'am, we shall all get quite comfortable, after we gets a shake or two.”

The two spinsters could only sigh, and off started the coach. On the opposite seat sat three gentlemen, so we must, at all events, call them. In the right hand corner was a Mr. Parks, a lawyer of considerable practice and experience, residing in a handsome villa, within a couple of miles of Lyme. He had come down from London to Bridport, by mail, but having some business there, that occupied him an hour or so, he lost the mail, and being anxious to get home that night, took a place

in the "Heavy Axminster." Next Mr. Parks sat a young gentleman, elaborately dressed, in the height of the fashion, with a profusion of jewelry on his hands and person, who talked a great deal after the coach started, about London, the theatres, balls, operas, &c. Stating that, tired of dissipation, he had made up his mind to lead a rural sea-side kind of life, and was going to Lyme, and thence to Charmouth; the latter place, he understood, was remarkably salubrious, retired, and picturesque. All this conversation was addressed to every body inside the coach, and replied to by none; next this young gentleman was a tall man, entirely enveloped in an immense military mantle—the collar buttoned close round his face, leaving only the eyes visible, and as the night set in, on quitting the "Bell" yard, at Bridport, the said eyes also became invisible, whilst not a word proceeded from this passengers lips.

The young gentleman with the jewelry finding he had all the conversation to himself,

became silent. The three females were silent also, from various causes. Mrs. Jos Burfat was calculating the gross profits arising from a speculation she had made that day. The two spinsters were calculating between the intervals of suffocation they endured from Mrs. Jos, whether it would not be possible to induce the young gentleman opposite, to try the sea breeze of Lyme, instead of Charmouth, this latter place was not, at that time, a rival "watering place."

Fortunately for the spinsters, the distance from Bridport to Lyme Regis was only ten miles or so, which distance the "Heavy Axminster could comfortably perform in three hours, or thereabouts. But just as the coach reached the bottom of a hill, and was ascending another, it suddenly began to stop, and several loud voices were audible, and some deep curses and imprecations hurled at the coachman. One loud clear voice was distinctly heard, saying—

“Pull up, or by —— I’ll blow your brains out.”

“Oh, Lord a mercy upon us,” screamed the two spinsters. “Robbers! We shall be robbed and murdered.”

“Mercy on me,” exclaimed Mrs. Jos Burfat, “I’m a ruined woman.”

At the word robbers, the tall silent gentleman, in the corner, sat bolt up right, and all inside could hear the click of a pistol lock, as he pulled one out from beneath his mantle.

Mr. Parks very quietly put his hand into his pocket, perfectly resigned to give up its contents, which, probably only amounted to a few pounds. During these proceedings, which occupied but a few seconds, the coach came to a full stop, the door was rudely pulled open, and a tall, strong man, with the coach lamp in his hand, his face covered with black crape, and his person by a long carters frock, appeared at the door; behind him were three

others, similarly disguised, and each held a horse pistol in their hands.

The gentleman in the mantle drew back the pistol, when he saw the odds he had to contend with, but the women screamed murder and all sorts of things.

“Silence, you bedlamites, with your yells,” said the highwayman, “make no words, but hand over your purses and rings, and no harm will come to you.”

As he spoke the man put a foot upon the step and held up the open lamp, the light, as he did so, flashing on the features of the stranger in the mantle, whose collar had fallen back.

“Ha, by —— is it you,” exclaimed the robber, in a tone of intense surprise, “come, jump out, I must speak with you. Here, Jem, levy contributions, and see you turn their pockets inside out. No skulking or hiding your purses or it will be worse for you all.”

The man in the mantle appeared electrified, but he jumped out at once ; as he did so, Mr. Parks, with all a lawyer's sagacity, having heard the words, cast a keen glance at his face and figure by the light of the coach-lamp. Another of the highwaymen entered the coach, and with a coarse, brutal oath, told the inmates to be quick, or he'd search them in a way they would not like. Mr. Parks delivered his purse and watch. The young Londoner whispered something in the robber's ear, who burst into a loud laugh, saying with a hideous oath—

“No go, young man. Don't acknowledge the fraternity ; so hand out and off with those pretty sparklers, if they are not shams.”

“Curse you !” muttered the young man, “hold your tongue—take what I have, and the devil do you good with it.”

“Ha, ha, ha,” laughed the robber, pocketing the contribution, and turning to Mrs. Jos. “Now, Mrs. Tallow.”

“Lord a mercy, sir. You would not sure ?”

“Come, no jaw, missus. You’re fat enough to melt anyhow. What’s in your basket?”

While the highwaymen plundered the inside and outside passengers, the stranger in the mantle, after jumping out of the coach, stepped aside with the tall robber who had first appeared at the coach door.

“How is this?” said the highwayman to the stranger, “that I find you here? Why am I treated with such neglect. You seem to forget our contract, and the peril you incur by treating my repeated——”

“Nonsense!” interrupted the stranger; “this is idle talk. My situation is worse than yours. After your exclamation I cannot go back into the coach, nor proceed to Lyme. There is a lawyer named Parks inside, so let the stage proceed. I have no luggage, and I will walk on to Charmouth with you, and a few words will convince you you wrong me; besides, you must have been mad to have engaged in this highway robbery.”

“Tut,” replied the robber, “a man must live; “but stay where you are, I will be back in a minute. I cannot give you more than half an hour, for I have a better job on hands than this. I wished those rascals not to meddle with the stage; but the devil himself could not manage these fellows at times.”

So saying, the robber joined his comrades, and in less than five minutes the old stage was rumbling away as fast as the astounded driver could urge the horses; and, like magic, the robbers themselves disappeared, leaving the stranger and the principal highwayman together.

We return to the little boy we left watching behind the wall upon the summit of the hill above Bridport.

About an hour after the passing of the heavy Axminster stage, the little fellow again perceiving two brilliant lights coming up the hill jumped up and ran out upon the road. Presently the two lights came close to him; they

were the lamps of a handsome gig, in which sat a gentleman buttoned up in a great coat, and by his side a groom in livery. The horse was a splendid, high-spirited animal, and seeing the boy in the middle of the road before his master did, he snorted and stood stock still.

“Hallo! what’s the matter, Bess, what’s the matter?” said a fine mellow voice from the gig; “what do you see, old girl?”

Just then, as the groom was getting down, the child came to the side of the gig, with the light of the lamp playing full upon his interesting, handsome face.

“Please, sir,” said the child, in his sweet-toned voice, “will you stop?”

The gentleman checked the horse, who was again going on, and, looking with extreme surprise down into the boy’s face, said—

“Well, my poor little fellow, what is the matter? how comes it you are out at this hour, and so cold a night? William,” he added, turning to his groom, “give the child,

God help it, a shilling, I cannot get my hand in my pocket."

"Oh, sir," said the child, "I don't want to beg—is your name Mr. Bond, please, sir?"

"By Jove, it is, my little fellow," returned Mr. Bond, surprised; "what then?"

"Please, sir, don't go home through 'Grange Hollow;' there be seven men, with their faces blackened, awaiting there to rob you, and kill your horse."

"Hallo, the devil they will—by Jove, that's serious. Help the little fellow up here, William. What a handsome child it is. I must hear more of this. Are you alone, child?" said Mr. Bond.

"Yes, sir, I be quite alone—neither father or mother."

"Lord, sir," said the groom, as he lifted the boy up, "I wanted your worship to bring fire-arms; they do say there are a lot of bad ones hiding about Charmouth cliffs. We shall be shot down like ducks."

“Faith, I hope not, William,” said Mr. Bond, with a laugh; “I have nothing of the duck in my nature, being neither feathered or web-footed, and no more idea of swimming than a stone. Now, my poor little fellow,” continued Mr. Bond, in a very kind tone, and, taking the child’s cold hand in his, after handing the reins to the groom, “tell me who you are, and all about these rascals with the black faces. Now, do not be frightened—we are good six miles and more from Grange Hollow.”

“I’m not frightened, sir,” said the child, “I be not afraid of anything.”

“By Jove, a fine little fellow, William,” said Mr. Bond, putting the skirts of his great coat round the child. “Now tell me all you know.”

The boy, in his own way, told his little story: he said he was cruelly treated by a tinker, known by the name of Black George—that there was a gang of them in different places about the country; and that that morn-

ing he had listened at Black George's tent, and heard him and a tinker, called Larking Bill, settling how they would stop and rob a Mr. Bond, by shooting his horse ; that they had a spy on Mr. Bond's movements, and knew he was to leave Bridport at nine o'clock at night, and that he had a very large sum of money with him ; they were seven in number, and they were to blacken their faces, and wear long carter's frocks ; and he overheard the tinker " George " say to his wife, that he was to have a great sum of money for taking him (the child) out of the country.

This narrative was only got out of the little fellow by repeated questioning by Mr. Bond, who became greatly interested. It was difficult also to comprehend the child—for, notwithstanding he was full seven years old, he seemed much at a loss for words to express his meaning.

" Had we not better return to Bridport for the night, sir ? " said the groom.

“You are easily frightened, William,” said Mr. Bond; “I shall have your mistress in a fever by such a proceeding. These rascals have been skulking about this part of the country for some time, and escaping detection by passing themselves off as gipsy tinkers; but I’ll ferret them out to-morrow; I will take care of this little fellow; he shall not go back to those rascals again; he has been stolen, no doubt, from some respectable persons, for there never was so handsome and fair a face belonging to gipsy tinkers’ brats.”

He could hear the poor boy sob, as he kissed his hand. Patting him on the head, he made him lie down on the rug, and the groom covered him over with the horse-cloth.

“What’s your name, little fellow?”

“Harry, sir,” said the boy, as he lay down.

“Ha! by Jupiter, my own name. There’s a cross road within a mile or two of this,” said Mr. Bond, “it’s a rough one, to be sure, but it will take us below the village of Char-

mouth, across the ford, and thus we can reach home without going near Grange Hollow—it's four miles round, to be sure, but I would not for fifty have Bess shot at."

"If you reach Charmouth in time, sir," said the groom, "you could send out some constables, and block up both ends of Grange Hollow, and catch the highwaymen."

"The first shot," said Mr. Bond, "would send the Charmouth constables running like a pack of beagles. I remember too well the way they left me when hunting up the gang of of smugglers from the cliffs."

So saying, Mr. Bond drove on, while the child, tired and worn out, fell asleep at his feet.

They soon reached the cross road, down which Mr. Bond turned his horse. It was in truth a very indifferent one, like all the Dorsetshire cross roads, extremely narrow with high hedges and deep ruts, enough to break the springs of any vehicle. Neverthe-

less Mr. Bond surmounted all the difficulties of the way, and crossing the ford of the Char he continued his route up another road, till he finally got out on the main road, within a mile or two of his own mansion, which was beautifully situated on a gently rising ground half-a-mile from the sea, and within a mile or so of the town of Lyme Regis.

The gig, at length, drew up before a very handsome lodge gate, with a remarkably pretty Swiss Cottage hid in a cluster of evergreens near it. A woman of some five or six and thirty years of age, neat and highly respectable in her person and attire, came out to open the gate.

“Well, Mrs. Horn, here we are safe and sound a couple of hours behind time.”

“Bless me, sir!” exclaimed the gate-keeper’s wife. “Bless me, what rain and roads you must have had,” eyeing the mud-covered wheels with great surprise, “we’ve not had a of rain here.”

“By jove, nor we either, Mrs. Horn—now come round to this side with your light for my lamp is out; I have got something here under the rug I want you to take charge of for the night. Now William lift him out, poor little thing he is fast asleep.”

Mrs. Horn looked the picture of astonishment when she beheld the form of the miserably clothed child, who looked up, as the groom lifted him out of the gig, but Mrs. Horn's light falling on the sweet expressive countenance, she exclaimed—

“Law, sir, what a nice pretty child—how thin it is.”

“Ah, we'll soon fatten him, Mrs. Horn. Now my poor child, go with this kind good woman, she will give you some supper and a good bed, and to-morrow I will have you up to the house.”

The tears flowed from the boy's eyes at the words of kindness addressed to him, and kiss-

ing his benefactor's hand repeatedly, he followed Mrs. Horn into the cottage.

“Dress him in your son William's garments, Mrs. Horn,” said Mr. Bond as he was driving off, “they are much of the same age, though this little fellow is tall and thin.”

Mr. Horn, the husband of the gate-keeper, was Mr. Bond's game-keeper, he was then walking the preserves. Mr. Bond drove on up a long serpentine avenue, bordered on one side by tall trees and evergreens, with the bright calm sea lying before them, just then becoming visible from the light of the moon at that moment rising from its ocean bed, and shortly after drew up before the front of a very extensive and handsome modern mansion.

CHAPTER V.

HENRY EDGAR BOND Esq., the gentleman who so benevolently took charge of the boy, as related in our last chapter, was of a very old aristocratic Dorsetshire family. Early in life this gentleman, whose property and influence were considerable in his native county, married the only daughter of Sir Henry Claude Tregannon, father to the late baronet, whose untimely and terrible death we have recorded. Thus through a singular combination of circumstances, under the directing hand of Pro-

vidence, the lost child and heir of the unfortunate Baronet, was actually taken under the protection and even the roof of his aunt's husband, for, no doubt, our readers have surmized, that the poor boy so cruelly treated, and so miserably clad and fed, was no other than the lost heir of Tregannon.

Though a most amiable and lovely girl, Mrs. Bond, before her marriage, was never a favourite with her eccentric and strange brother. Nevertheless she was fondly attached to him, pitying his nervous temperament, and his bodily infirmities; but from the day of her marriage with Mr. Bond all intercourse had ceased between them.

Mr. Bond first met Miss Tregannon in Devonshire, where she was passing the Christmas. At that time he was a very handsome, high-spirited young man, and was shooting, in the season, at a friend's house near where Miss Tregannon was staying; they met frequently, and as young people will do, fell in love with

each other. Mr. Bond, whose station in society was unquestionable, and whose fortune rendered him a most desirable match, considered that he had nothing to do, but, as a matter of courtesy, ask the lady's hand of her brother, she being of age, and quite independent.

To his extreme surprise, Sir Henry Tregannon declined giving his consent, saying—

“ All the Dorsetshire gentlemen spend their fortunes on dogs and horses.”

Mr. Bond was too good tempered to be vexed, and too much in love to trouble himself much about the Baronet's conduct, especially as the lady only required him to make a formal proposal for her hand to her brother as the head of the family, but was quite determined, as she knew her heart was well disposed of to follow its dictates, whether her brother gave his consent or not. They were, therefore, married, and Mr. Bond returned to his beautiful seat of Grange House, Dorsetshire, with his lovely and accomplished bride.

Sir Henry never spoke to, or returned even an answer to any of his sister's letters after that event.

The young couple lived most happily—the only drawback they experienced to their felicity was that they had no children, and they both loved children in their hearts. At the time Mr. Bond so strangely and providentially stumbled on little Harry, they had both passed the period of youth, and abandoned all hope of any offspring. This was the more tantalizing as in default of male heir—his estates would go to his only male relative, a man of a most revengeful disposition, a cousin, unmarried, and a miser. Mr. Bond had it in his power, however, to will a considerable property to whom he pleased; for he did not at any time spend much more than the half of his income, which exceeded five thousand pounds a year. At the period of young Harry's introduction to Grange House, Mr. Bond was in his forty-fourth year, his lady three years younger.

He was still a handsome man, above the middle height, strongly built—with fair hair, blue eyes, and fine rudy complexion; and so temperate were his habits, and robust his constitution, that he did not look more than six and thirty.

No sorrow had ever troubled his life—therefore no wrinkle furrowed his brow, or tinged his hair with grey. He was a magistrate, kind and benevolent to the poor, and a most indulgent landlord. Upon poachers, being a thorough sportsman, he was, perhaps, rather severe. He kept the best pack of hounds within thirty miles, and rode the best hunters; as he advanced in life he rode thirteen stone, and yet there was scarcely a fence in the country would stop him. He was also fond of the sea—kept a remarkably fast yacht, of some fifty odd tons, in the harbour of Lyme Regis, and was considered by the club to be a first rate yachtsman, and not a bad sailor. He kept a good deal of company; never drank to

excess—rose early, and lived well. To add to his other qualifications—he was a steady staunch Church of England supporter, and had a great aversion to dissenters of all kinds and denominations. He was often earnestly entreated, by his numerous friends and others, to stand for the Borough of Bridport, but he had not the slightest ambition, and declined putting himself out of the way to oblige a party, though in all other matters he was a most generous friend and patron.

Before daylight next morning, for Mr. Bond was a most zealous and active magistrate, he despatched a party of resolute constables to scour the country in search of the gang of highwaymen—disguised as gipsy tinkers.

Conversing over his last night's adventure whilst at breakfast, Mrs. Bond became anxious to see the little boy. Their *tête-à-tête* was interrupted by a constable galloping up the avenue to the front door, requesting to see Mr. Bond.

“Shew him into my study, James,” said the magistrate, to his servant.

“There’s been pretty work, your worship,” said the constable to Mr. Bond, on entering the study, “the rascals have had the *hawdacity* to attack the Axminster stage last night, your honour.”

“Oh! the deuce they have,” said Mr. Bond.

“Yes, your honour; and by gosh they stripped the six inside passengers of every copper they had. Your honour’s friend, lawyer Parks, was inside, and lost his purse and watch, and worthy Mrs. Burfat, of Axminster, was robbed of forty-four pounds, odd shillings. The men had their faces blackened, and wore smock-frocks.”

“By Jove, this is serious. Did you pick up any suspicious characters this morning, Mr. Jones?”

“Yes, your worship, we secured three travelling tinkers, encamped near Grange Hol-

low,' and two others near Charmouth ; but do you know they only laughed at us for taking them for highwaymen."

"What have you done with them, Jones? Found anything on them suspicious?"

"Two pence three farthings on one, your worship, and about three shillings on another, but nothing else. We have lodged them in our lock-up, waiting your presence and Mr. Parks's, and a young gentleman who came in the Axminster stage—but we can't find this one nowhere, though we searched all the inns and lodging-houses in Lyme. Mr. Parks says as how he was a suspicious character."

"Well, Jones, go back, and tell Mr. Parks I will be in Lyme in half an hour."

Ten minutes afterwards Mr. Bond was galloping down the avenue. On reaching the head-inn, fresh intelligence had arrived. A Mr. Stephens, coming home in his gig from Bridport, in passing through Grange Hollow,

had his horse shot, and himself robbed; and he said that one of the men swore a fierce oath, saying, 'By ——, this is not Bond after all.' ”

“ Well, by Jove,” muttered Mr. Bond, “ I owe, if not my life, eight hundred pounds to the little fellow’s information.”

Mrs. Bond being extremely anxious to see the young child, both from the account her husband had given her of his interesting and handsome countenance, and also feeling under an obligation to the little fellow for the service he had rendered, sent her favorite personal attendant, Hannah, to the lodge to bring him up to the house. Mrs. Horn, the gamekeeper’s good-natured wife, had taken considerable pains with the child, not only from her own naturally good disposition, but from the account William the groom gave her the following morning of the child’s conduct the preceding night, saving them from being robbed, and his master’s favorite horse from being shot. The first process was to subject her charge to a most vigorous scrub-

bing. The beauty and fairness of his skin surprised her, and so great was the change, that she scarcely recognised him. William, who came down to the lodge early, was in raptures with the boy, vowed his master would make a gentleman of him, and that he would teach him to cross a ditch or a fence with the best man in the county.

The child said, with a smile, he could get over any fence or ditch.

“Ah!” said the groom, “no doubt. The rascals that stole you made you go through fences to steal fowls.” He shook his fist, and in a paroxysm of valour clenched his hand, wishing he had a grip of two or three of them.

The boy was finished being dressed in a suit of the gamekeeper’s son’s garments, for which act of generosity on the part of Mrs. Horn, her son roared loudly and kicked vigorously, shaking his little fist furiously at Harry for thus figuring in his Sunday suit. For this expression of his indignation he received a smart box

on the ear, which rather increased the roaring, but stopped the kicking. In the midst of this scene in walked Mrs. Bond's maid, Hannah. This young woman—and a very good-looking young woman she was—about eighteen years of age—was perhaps the only person in Mrs. Bond's service, who would look upon the child, if brought into the mansion to live, with a certain sort of dislike. This did not proceed from ill nature, or a bad disposition—for, in truth, Hannah was in general a very good-tempered and well-disposed person.

She was a great favourite with her mistress, who received her into her service at the age of fourteen.

Mrs. Bond differed from many married ladies not blessed with children. She kept neither a pet spaniel, pug or poodle, but she dearly loved children.

When Hannah, therefore, beheld the strikingly beautiful boy, thus strangely to be intro-

duced into the family, her heart fluttered with a feeling something akin to aversion—for it told her that that lovely child, with its magnificent eyes, and soft pensive look, his beautiful white broad forehead, with the rich cluster of curls, of a dark auburn, encircling it, would become a prodigious favourite—in fact, completely put her into the back ground, or to be only a second favourite, and perhaps be appointed to attend on the little stranger. There was nothing very contrary to human nature in the little feeling of envy that, for a moment, took possession of Hannah's heart.

“Well, Miss Hannah,” said Mrs. Horn, with really a feeling of pride at her own handy work, “what do you think of this dear little fellow? isn't he a real beauty? I'm very sure he's some gentleman's child, stolen away by those shocking vagrants, the gipsy tinkers.”

“Law,” said Hannah, “I don't see why poor people should not have as handsome chil-

dren as rich—or why their skins should not be as white. He's a very well looking boy, no doubt ; so is your John, Mrs. Horn."

"I'm much obliged to you, Miss Hannah, for thinking so," said the gamekeeper's wife ; "but, indeed, this is a mighty pretty child ; and when he gets a little flesh, you won't know him."

"Well, people will take fancies, Mrs. Horn," said the lady's maid ; "and I dare say my mistress will make a page of this little fellow—he will do very well for that station in two or three years. It's very strange," she continued, looking at the child, whose soft, winning eyes were fixed upon hers with so much sweetness and good nature, that they quite softened Hannah's heart.

"What's strange, Miss Hannah?" asked William, the groom, taking the boy by the hand to lead him up to the house.

"Why," resumed the girl, "the more I look at him, I fancy I have seen some one very

like him about the eyes. What does he say his name is, Mrs. Horn?"

"Harry, he calls himself," she replied.

"By gummers, Miss Hannah," said the groom, "talking of who he's like. He has the same eyes and nose, I'm blessed if he hasn't, as our missus."

"Well, there's no use one staying here guessing who he's like," said the maid. "I will take him up at once. My good lady is anxious to see him; so come along with me, Harry."

The boy gave his hand readily to the girl, but first threw his arms round Mrs. Horn's neck, and kissed her most affectionately.

"He is a dear little fellow, be he who he may," said good Mrs. Horn, kissing him, and telling him to come and see her every day, and play with her little John.

Taking him by the hand, Hannah led the boy up the serpentine avenue to the mansion. There was a resemblance in some respects in

the lawn, the lofty trees and the shrubbery of evergreens on the side of Grange House to that of Tregannon. To be sure, instead of the lawn being bounded by the narrow waters of the Fal, the wide open expanse of sea, lay stretched out in glorious beauty before Grange house.

As the boy walked up the avenue, he looked often about him, with a strange, pensive, enquiring look; gradually the tears came into his eyes, as if some chord in his young memory was suddenly struck.

Hannah looked into the child's face and seeing the tears streaming down his cheeks, said in a tone of surprise: "What on earth are you crying for, little boy?"

"Don't know, ma'am," said the child—

He tried to say something more as if to embody, perhaps, the flash of memory like a meteor dashing through his little brain, but he wanted words. It seemed as if his power of

speech in infancy had been rudely checked, or injured through fear or suffering, for at times his language was strange and unintelligible.

In a few minutes they reached the house, and leading the wondering child through the great hall, she opened the parlour-door, and led the boy into the room where Mrs. Bond sat reading before a bright sea-coal fire. As the boy advanced into the room, Mrs. Bond laid aside her book, and looked up into the child's face, and as she did so, she exclaimed with a heightened colour—

“God bless me, Hannah, is this the boy! It's scarcely possible—and yet—what a striking resemblance. Come here, my dear child.”

Getting up, with a good deal of agitation in her manner, she took the surprised child by the hand, and sitting down pushed the curling hair from his forehead, gazed long and anxiously into his face, till the tears came

into her own eyes, and stooping down she kissed the boy, saying to the wondering Hannah—

“This is no delusion, I cannot be deceived. The likeness is too remarkable, infinitely too great to be the effect of chance, or a caprice of nature. Go up stairs, Hannah, and in my casket you will see two miniature cases, bring them down.”

As Hannah left the room, Mrs. Bond caressed the child to re-assure him for his eyes wandered strangely and enquiringly round the room; the handsome furniture, the costly decorations, even the elegant attire of Mrs. Bond herself seemed to excite some new and strange feeling in his breast. Mrs. Bond thought the child felt an awe of her and the things about him, but such was not the case; it was his memory, struggling through the cloud of years of suffering and neglect. It was a vision of the past, recalled by the sight of the things surrounding him, now first

brought before his sight since the period of his abduction. The spell was on his young heart, and it held him as it were entranced.

“My poor child,” said Mrs. Bond, “you are very thin; do you know how old you are?”

“Old,” repeated the boy, with a look of surprise, and then shaking his little head, he replied: “no ma’am.”

“Do you know what a year is?”

“Yes, ma’am; winter and summer, is a year.”

“How many winters, my child, do you remember since you were taken to live with those bad people.”

The child seemed to shrink, and he repeated “winters,” and then with the tears in his eyes, he looked into the fine intellectual features of Mrs. Bond, saying—

“It was always winter to me, ma’am.”

Just then Hannah returned with the two miniature cases, and handed them to her mis-

tress. Opening one of them with a little nervous agitation, Mrs. Bond said—

“This is a striking likeness of my poor brother, at the age of sixteen. The other drawn about twelve months before his melancholy death.”

“Lord a mercy, ma’am,” exclaimed Hannah, with a start as her gaze rested on the exposed miniatures, “it’s the very image of this child, the same eyes, the same hair, and the same sad expression of countenance.”

“Yes,” said Mrs. Bond, in a low sad tone of voice. “My heart surely has not deceived me; this boy is my illfated brother’s child. Notwithstanding, it appears incredible. Such a perfect likeness in a mere stranger is quite impossible; besides, this child’s age is the same to all appearance, and he is a stolen child. The body found, so mutilated, as to be only recognized by the garments, and buried as the heir of Tregannon was that of an impostor.”

While Mrs. Bond spoke, the child’s eyes were never taken off the miniature, but

the moment she opened the case of the other miniature, the child beheld Sir Henry Claude Tregannon, attired in the dress he usually wore, and one the boy was accustomed to see in his early infancy, he exclaimed, clasping his hands passionately—

“Oh! my papa! my own papa!”

And bursting into a flood of tears, he hid his face in Mrs. Bond's lap, sobbing loudly. That lady with a pale cheek looked at Hannah, and the astounded maid looked at her mistress.

“Can there be any doubt now, Hannah,” said Mrs. Bond, “that child's memory was roused at the sight of his father's features. A father who doted on him, and who every day had the child to play for hours in his study.”

Thus in a moment was the happy past recalled to the cruelly illused child.

Kissing his cheek fondly, Mrs. Bond strove to bring him still more alive to the past, but he wanted the power to express what he thought. Still she was quite satisfied she

had found her lost nephew—nothing should ever shake her belief in that.

Turning to Hannah, she said—

“This is a very strange and mysterious affair; till something more positive is discovered, I must request you will keep what you know a secret. I am sure I can trust you, my good girl, for I have had the experience of years in studying your character. This dear child I place under your care; get a bed put up in your room for him, and when Mr. Bond returns, we will consult together, about this providential and most extraordinary discovery.”

“You may depend on me, ma’am,” said Hannah, wonderfully changed in opinion with respect to the child; and seeing that her mistress was buried in deep thought, she took the boy with her, and before two hours had passed, had quite won his little heart by her kindness and attention.

CHAPTER VI.

It was nearly six o'clock before Mr. Bond returned, and with him came Mr. Parks, a friendship of long standing existing between them. Mr. Bond had spent several hours on horseback with mounted constables, endeavouring to discover some trace of the highwaymen of the preceding night, but without success.

Out of the five persons captured by the constables, in the morning, not one could be positively sworn to by any of the parties robbed. They were, however, detained until they could

be confronted with Mr. Stephens, the gentleman whose horse was shot, and himself robbed and much hurt.

During dinner nothing was said relative to the child, as Mrs. Bond did not wish to begin the conversation till the servants had retired, leaving them to their dessert and wine.

“Well, my dear,” said Mr. Bond, “now that we are to ourselves, let me hear what your opinion is of my intended *protégé*. I have quite interested our friend Parks about him, and were it not so late, I would have him down here; his little handsome face so interested me.”

Mrs. Bond, in a concise, but clear manner, related to her husband and Mr. Parks her interview with the child, and her own positive conviction that she had, under her roof, her own nephew, the heir of Tregannon.

“God bless my soul, Ellen,” exclaimed Mr. Bond, in the greatest astonishment, “the child may have an extraordinary likeness to

your poor brother, but it's quite impossible ; recollect your little nephew's body was found, recognized, and buried."

" I differ with you there, friend Bond," said Mr. Parks, who had listened to Mrs. Bond with great attention, " it's not at all impossible, it's extraordinary, certainly, but it happens that I was at Truro, concerned in that singular case of Admiral S——'s claims to the Trefuses property, at the very time the unfortunate Sir Henry Claude Tregannon met his death, from accidentally taking, as it was said, an over dose of prussic acid. I felt particularly interested, on hearing of that strange event, and the loss of the child at that period. There were four of us lawyers, at Truro, at the time, and though opposed to each other in the case of Admiral S——s, we always dined together, and Sir Henry's strange death, and the loss of the child, engaged our attention and conversation. It also happened that Mr. Saunders, one of the four, was the very man employed in

the forgery case against the Baronet's nephew — James Tregannon. As we talked the matter over, it forcibly struck us all, that there was something very mysterious in the Baronet's death, as well as in the loss of the child. The body was not found at this time, you see," continued the lawyer, "but, I beg pardon, I am engrossing all the conversation."

"Pray proceed, my good friend," said Mr Bond, "for you are interesting me much, and causing my thoughts to revert to the past. Let us hear what you and your brethren of the long robe thought and said."

"The verdict of the coroner, you may remember," resumed Mr. Parks, "was, that the Baronet died from inadvertently taking an over dose of prussic acid. Now, Mr. Saunders, who is considered one of the keenest and cleverest men in the profession, was decidedly of opinion that the unfortunate Sir Henry never could have inadvertently taken so powerful a dose of prussic acid, as to cause instantane-

ous death. He was in the habit, it seems, of taking one drop, for a troublesome cough. He was well acquainted with poisons, so great a dose as he must have taken, could not have been poured out drop-by drop, or he would, no matter how preoccupied his mind might have been, have discovered what he was about. If he took it for the purpose of terminating his existence, why that frightful shriek, that roused his attendant and the rest of the family. Then again, the Baronet's own man, at first, said he heard his master's door shut, at least he thought so, as he hurried along the corridor, but he contradicted himself afterwards, saying it must have been his imagination, for it was impossible such should be the case. Another curious, though apparently trivial circumstance occurred. The stopper was in the crystal bottle that contained the prussic acid, and that stopper was a very peculiar one, and could not be put in like a cork."

"And to what conclusion," interrupted Mr.

Bond, "did these certainly somewhat singular circumstances lead you?"

"Why, one that will startle you, my good friend: that Sir Henry Tregannon neither took the poison inadvertently, or with the intention of ending his life. Recollect he could have no motive in doing so. He could not, in four and twenty hours, have given up all hope of recovering his child—hope still remained to him, as a more extensive and strict search was ordered for the following day. The Baronet himself was known to express a firm conviction that the child was stolen, not drowned."

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed Mrs. Bond, turning very pale, as some thought or other flitted through her brain; "you have quite upset all my previous ideas with respect to my poor brother's death. You seem, my good friend, at least so I judge by your argument, to have an idea that my illfated brother met his death unfairly."

"Such, my dear madam, was the decision

we all came to," said Mr. Parks. "In vain we racked our brains to solve the mystery—we could not investigate the affair—we had no right, and immediately afterwards we were fully occupied in the important cause which had brought us together. Just before I left Truro, I heard that the body of the unfortunate child had been found. This gave rise to fresh surmises, but it appeared that though the garments, etc., were easily recognisable, there was difficulty in identifying the body, the face and person were so mutilated by the action of the tides and by fishes and crabs, so when I left Truro and proceeded to London with my friend Saunders to finish our Law proceedings, I carried with me the conviction that the body found was *not* Sir Henry Tregannon's child.

"When I returned home, I did not like to discuss this subject with you, my dear madam, as I could see no good would arise by doing so, but now what you say with respect to this child, my good friend here has taken so great

a fancy to, and which you seem so determined to consider your lost nephew, induces me again to resume the subject, and I must ask you a few questions, for you know during my absence abroad I lost all trace, and indeed thoughts concerning the poor child. In the first place, I presume, in default of a direct heir, that your scapegrace of a nephew, James Tregannon, succeeded to the title and property."

"Exactly so," said Mr. Bond, "there was no one to dispute his claims; but you will be surprised when you hear that previously to gaining the property he married the eldest daughter of his attorney, a Mr. Stonehenge."

"God bless my soul," exclaimed Mr. Parks, "married Stonehenge's daughter! Why it was Stonehenge that secured his acquittal when tried for forgery. There is something curious in that—that attorney would barter his soul for gold and station, though I have no right to say so, but such was the character he held. My dear madam," continued Mr. Parks, ad-

dressing Mrs. Bond, "I thought you told me some years ago that your nephew had a wife."

"So he had," returned the lady; "but of course she must have died."

"What became of your three nieces?" demanded Mr. Parks.

"The eldest, Miss Tregannon, the daughter of my brother's first wife, married Sir Charles Trecastle, having inherited her mother's fortune, a very considerable one. The two girls by his second wife were amply provided for by his marriage settlement; for my brother died without a will. I at once offered to take the two girls under my protection; but Lady Trecastle claimed their guardianship, and as the girls evinced a wish to be under her protection, I could make no objection."

"But here," said Mr. Bond, "comes the most extraordinary part of the business—just as Sir James was about to take possession of the Estate of Tregannon he was forced to fly the country, and very lucky he was to escape."

Mr. Parks looked greatly surprised, saying—
“How was that, friend?”

“The fact is,” continued Mr. Bond, “painful as it is for us to relate—but with so old and firm a friend as you, we can have no reservation. The fact is, the career of this man, James Tregannon, must have been one of the most depraved and vicious it is possible to conceive. It appears he was recognised by a constable of Leeds, a Cornish man, as an individual named Smith, under which name it seems he was connected with a notorious gang of coiners, who infested the towns of Leeds, Manchester, and Birmingham: he was also recognised as one of a gang of burglars who broke into a stock-broker’s house in Leeds, and had nearly carried off a rich booty, but were surprised by this same constable and six others who, though they failed in securing more than one of the number, distinctly recognised the coiner Smith; but being a strong and very active man, in a struggle with this constable,

he overpowered him inflicting a desperate gash on his head with a crow-bar, from which he was some time recovering. This man, as I said, a Cornish man by birth, happened to be visiting his family connections in Falmouth, when James Tregannon, then Sir James, was passing the house he was in on horseback. 'By heavens! that's Smith the coiner,' exclaimed the constable, rushing out of the house into the street. It happened at that moment that James Tregannon looked back, and met the eyes of the constable eagerly fixed upon his person; he must have instantly recognised the man; for, putting spurs to his horse, he galloped rapidly on, but not before the constable pointed him out to a shopkeeper who was standing at his door, saying—

“Do you know that person who passed on horseback?”

“Oh, yes,” he is pretty well known here. It is Sir James Tregannon, of Tregannon Park.”

The constable laughed outright saying :—

“ Well, curse me if that ain’t a clincher. So, nothing but a baronetcy would do—where the devil has he raised the wind.”

“ The shop-keeper stared at the constable, for not knowing him, or his motive for speaking as he did, he thought the man’s words most extraordinary. But Trelawney, the name of the Leed’s constable, was a keen, quick witted, active officer, and knew there was a large reward offered for the apprehension of Smith, and another man, whose name I forget, and it was impossible to shake his conviction, that the man who passed him on horseback was Smith. After a series of enquiries he learned all about Sir James Tregannon, his having, when a young man, been tried for forgery, and acquitted, and that no one knew what became of him from the period of his acquittal, till his reappearance as Sir James Tregannon.

„ The consequence of this discovery was, that the Baronet, had to fly the country, leaving

the Attorney, Stonehenge, to take possession of the Tregannon property with liberty to do what he pleased. And it is said, Sir James and his wife are residing in France—of course the Attorney, Stonehenge, remitting the revenues of the estates to him.

“ While the constable lives, he will never be able to return, for we heard that Stonehenge had offered to pay a very large sum to hush up this matter, but Trelawney swears he will live to hang him yet, though he be a Baronet.

“ Thus stands the affair, as far as we have been informed. In the beginning we had a good deal of correspondence concerning the Tregannon family, and the strange events that have occurred, but of late we have heard little or nothing. To-morrow when you come here you will see the boy, and we shall have a better opportunity of judging of his strange resemblance to Mrs. Bond’s brother, Sir Henry,

and if we really think he is our nephew, we must take immediate steps to prove him so."

"Ah, my worthy friend," said the Lawyer with a smile "it is easy to talk of taking steps, but we must have something more tangible to work upon, than a striking resemblance—not worth a fig in a law court. I should like to catch that fellow called 'Black George' the ruffian, who so cruelly ill treated the child, if we had hold of him we might do something in earnest."

"We must offer a reward for his apprehension," said Mr. Bond, "at all events, I will send two active and clever London officers to track the rascal; if he stays in the country they'll find him."

"Ah, if so we shall gain a good starting point, in fact, his evidence alone, if he can be induced to give it, would perhaps settle the question at once."

"By-the-bye, Mr. Parks," said Mrs. Bond, "let me hear all about the stopping of the

Axminster Stage, last night. I was very sorry to hear that you were a sufferer by it."

"Well not much of a sufferer, my dear madam," said the Lawyer, with a merry laugh, "poor Mrs. Burfat the rich Lady Bucheress was melted to a good amount I am sorry to say, for she is an excellent woman, though enormously fat. She positively nearly smothered the two spinsters, of Stagehill Terrace, the two Miss Trincherds, who, by-the-bye, are neither of them of Pharaoh's lean kind. You may fancy it was a tight fit, those three amiable women hedged on one seat of the Axminster Stage."

Mrs. Bond smiled, saying,

"Was there not a young gentleman—rather profusely decorated with jewelry—one of the passengers?"

"Yes, and by Jove, if I could have got hold of him or that other tall fellow, his next neighbour in the coach, I would have had them arrested as suspicious characters. The fellow

with the jewelry, was decidedly a London pickpocket, and the other no doubt was a highwayman, for the robber who first entered the coach, instantly recognised him, saying, with an oath :—

“Ha, is this you !”

“And he then jumped out, and did not make his appearance again, when the coach was permitted to resume its journey. I got a glimpse of his countenance, however, and a remarkable one it was, the light of the lamp fell full upon it for a minute, and I looked keenly at him, being struck by the robber’s words.”

“What kind of man was he ?” demanded Mr. Bond, “for two men were traced to Charmouth, and hired a boat there, a fishing smack, but where they went to, we cannot yet discover, for the fishing boat with three men, and a boy in her, has not yet returned, but, I fancy those two men were the highway-

man and the confederate or comrade you had in the coach."

"I dare say the same persons," remarked Mr. Parks, "the robber wore a piece of crape over his face, therefore as to his features, I can say nothing. In person he was a tall powerful man, and so was the other; in years between thirty and forty, aquiline nose, very dark eyes and hair, sallow complexion, and what struck me was a singular long livid mark, reaching from the corner of the left eye, towards the left ear."

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Mrs. Bond, in a startled voice, "my miserable nephew, James Tregannon, has that identical mark; it was caused by a fall from his horse when very young—hunting. It was a deep incision, and was sewed up, but a strange long narrow mark of a livid colour always remained. Besides, your description exactly answers his person, his eye brows were also somewhat remark-

able, projecting much, and very dark and bushy."

"By Jingo, that's the man," said the Lawyer with great vivacity. "It must be that other rascal—beg pardon my dear madam, for using such a word in reference to your nephew, but that other, no doubt, was the gipsy tinker, 'Black George,' the child heard planning the robbery."

"It will be difficult to trace their route," said Mr. Bond, "for, by the time the boat returns, they will, doubtless, have left the place where the smack took them. Now this confirms me in Mrs. Bond's assertion that the child is her nephew, and, if so, James Tregannon was the man that caused him to be stolen."

"Yes," put in the lawyer; "and that gipsy George was the rascal employed to do it; the plot thickens, but to unravel it will be difficult. We must catch that Black George, without him we are quite powerless."

Mr. Parks left rather late, promising to return the next day to see the child thus strangely introduced under the hospitable roof of his own relatives.

CHAPTER VII.

THE following morning, our little hero was introduced into the presence of the warm-hearted Mr. Bond. Even one night of repose and kindness performed wonders for the poor child. In truth, kindness was very new to him, and his little heart, naturally fond and grateful, was full of love for those who had thus rescued him from a life of misery and degradation. Mrs. Bond kissed him with fond affection, while her husband gazed alternately

at the child and the minatures placed on the table.

“ You are right, Ellen, quite right, I am sure,” he said, after a silence of some moments, “ this is no chance resemblance—this is powerfully striking—the boy bears in his little features all the singular characteristics of his race ; but, as my old friend Parks says, resemblance is not worth a fig in a law court. However, till something turns up, or we gain some further clue, he shall be reared as my nephew, and take my name ; and, if the worst comes to the worst, he shall inherit all I can save henceforth out of my income. The Grange estate, you know, goes at my death, default of male heir,” and Mr. Bond sighed in spite of himself, “ to that rascally, miserly wretch, my cousin, Curtis Bond, who has already ten times more than he ought to have ; and he will have the power to will it to whom he pleases. God forgive me, he’s no use in the

world. If I survive him, the power will be mine to will it ; but, confound him, he's fifteen years my junior. It's one comfort, however, that villanous nephew of ours, James Tregannon, will not get it."

"I trust in God, my love," said Mrs. Bond, patting the cheek of the child, "that the difficulties in our way may be got over, and that this sweet and cruelly used child may regain its rights, and that for many, many years, my beloved Harry, you will be spared to us."

"I hope so, my dear," said Mr. Bond ; "but let us look to the present, and leave the future in the hands of an All-wise and Omnipotent Judge. Ha ! there is Parks coming up the avenue."

A few words is here necessary concerning the worthy and kind-hearted lawyer, Mr. Parks. He was a bachelor, in his forty-eighth year ; by his own abilities and exertions he had amassed a considerable property, and purchased a very handsome villa residence near

his native town, Lyme Regis, within less than a quarter of a mile of Grange House. He had a younger brother, a barrister, residing in London, with a very large family, mainly dependent on the liberal and generous lawyer, for he had neither the abilities or perseverance necessary to make a figure or fortune in the profession he had embraced. One of his elder daughters resided with her uncle, a very amiable and handsome girl, just turned eighteen, and to whom Mr. Parks was much attached, having, in fact, reared her from a mere child. A steady housekeeper, two female domestics, and two men-servants, formed Mr. Parks's establishment at Bellevue Cottage.

We now resume our narrative ; Mr. Parks, on entering the room, found his friend, Mr. Bond, with little Harry on his knee, trying, by adopting his language to the child's comprehension, to bring his little mind to bear upon the past. He had succeeded in fixing

his attention ; and some few observations the child made convinced him that his recollection would perhaps return by degrees. Mr. Parks was astonished at the extraordinary resemblance the child bore to the two miniatures, and much interested by his singular beauty and engaging manner.

“This poor boy is strangely backward for his age,” said Mr. Parks. “No doubt, he has been purposely treated with cruelty and neglect to drive away all recollection of his early years ; but I still think, as you both do, that there is no doubt as to his origin. As it now stands, it will be a puzzling case for a lawyer to make anything of ; indeed, it would be worse than useless, on such shallow grounds as we possess to dispute the succession of James Tregannon, especially since there was a body actually found and dressed in the lost child’s garments, and recognized by many as the heir of Tregannon, especially by the governess, Miss Pritchard. Have you re-

marked that there are three letters—‘H. C. T.,’ and the year ‘178—,’ burnt into this boy’s shoulder with gunpowder and some composition that gipsies and sailors use for tattooing themselves with? Those three letters stand curiously enough for Henry Claude Tregannon, and the villain that stole him must have done it to recognize him, or for some purpose of his own.”

“Those letters were certainly never on the child before he was stolen,” said Mrs. Bond. “I remember hearing my poor brother’s head gardener, who was a great favorite, and a highly respectable and superior man of his class, positively denied that the body found was that of young Claude Tregannon, that he had a mark on his left arm, from a severe cut, and the body found had no such mark. One of the female attendants too, who had the care of the child on that unfortunate day, and who has never been herself since, also declared that the body found was not her master’s child.

However, so contradictory were the opinions, that Sir Charles Treastle became satisfied by taking the plurality of assertions, and the body was buried as that of the heir of Tregannon. I wrote immediately to my niece, Lady Treastle, but, strange to say, though a most amiable woman, she never evinced any desire to keep up an intimacy with me after my marriage. However, she answered my letter very kindly, but stated she felt quite satisfied that her unfortunate little brother perished by falling into the river, and that the body found was, undoubtedly, his. She spoke very feelingly of my illness, for I was very ill at the time, and unable, for some time after, to leave my room. It was that illness which prevented my at once leaving this for Tregannon. Mr. Bond attended at the funeral of my unfortunate brother, but was not at that of the supposed heir."

"Well, my conviction is," said the lawyer, "that we had better make no stir in this

matter, at present. The villain who had this child in his power, will not dare to make any enquiries about him, besides, being concerned in the robbery of the coach, he would fear the child's recognizing him. You must try and get hold of him," he continued, addressing Mr. Bond. "It was a most providential circumstance, your falling in with the dear boy as you did, and you must watch, carefully, that they do not attempt to steal him again."

To this arrangement, Mr. and Mrs. Bond willingly agreed. The lady, satisfied that her nephew was rescued from a life of misery and degradation, left the restoration of his rights to time and Providence; and Mr. Bond was delighted with his engaging and handsome *protégé*.

On the return of the fishing boat to Charmouth, Mr. Bond had the men brought before him. On questioning them, they declared that a gentleman, and only one gentleman, had engaged them, for a round sum, to sail for

Guernsey, and land him there, which they did, and returned immediately after doing so, but they knew nothing, whatever, about him, and readily took their oaths that there was but one, and very accurately described him, proving that he was the same person Mr. Parks had travelled from Bridport with. This intelligence induced Mr. Bond to send an active police constable to hunt for some trace of Black George, but after three weeks' diligent search, no trace whatever could be discovered. The five men taken up, on suspicion, were finally released, as no positive proof could be brought against them.

In a few weeks, everything in and about Grange House fell into its usual train, and little Harry Bond soon became a prodigious favourite with every one, but especially of Hannah's who, when abroad, scarcely ever let him out of her sight.

We must now, gentle reader, change our

scene, and return to Tregannon Mansion, some seven or eight weeks after the reception of Harry into the family of Mr. Bond. Very little, if any, change had taken place in either the park, or the mansion, as far as external appearance went. The fact is, some time elapsed before Mr. Stonehenge thought fit to permit Sir James to make his appearance after his hastily concluded marriage with his eldest daughter. He advised his going abroad for a time, to allow the talk his succession would cause to subside ; besides, there were numerous debts to pay, for Mr. Stonehenge did not consider it becoming in the heir to plead the statute of limitation, to save himself from his liabilities. Neither was Mr. Stonehenge aware of the acts of his son-in-law's early life ; he knew nothing, at all events, of a large reward having been offered for his apprehension, as coiner and burglar, under the name of Smith ; that part of his career he kept to him-

self, not though the attorney suspected there were secrets hid from him, but not so fatal a one as he learned afterwards, when too late.

Mr. Stonehenge had found little difficulty in persuading his eldest daughter to accept the Baronet; she was even more ambitious than her father, and eagerly grasped at the gilded bait held out to her. That her father possessed some secret power over Sir James Tregannon, she was keen enough to perceive; but as it was turned to her advantage, she troubled herself very little about it; she was a woman of a strong masculine mind, and in a short time acquired considerable influence over her husband. She perceived that at times he was moody, sullen, and subject to terrible fits of dejection, and when so, drank hard. She had no affection for him, nor indeed was it possible she could—another thing she discovered that puzzled and perplexed her. Her husband detested her father, and yet he did what he

pleased—managed the estate, and dictated to Sir James whatever he considered it necessary he should do; and the Baronet did it, but cursed the dictator.

Rosa, the youngest and prettiest of the Attorney's two daughters, was an amiable and sweet tempered girl, somewhat romantic, but sincere and true hearted; she beheld, with astonishment, the marriage of her sister with Sir James Tregannon; she abhorred the sight of the man, and openly, to her father's great vexation and anger, declared her sister would yet be bitterly sorry for uniting herself to a man gloomy and abstracted at times, and whose previous life was so disgraceful.

Mrs. Stonehenge was silent; she never had much influence with her husband; she loved quiet and comfort, and when the entire family went to reside at Tregannon House, the elegance and style of every thing quite charmed her. Not one of the late Baronet's servants

or attendants were retained. Mrs. Stonehenge replaced them with others of her own selecting.

At length Sir James and Lady Tregannon returned from a sojourn of some time in Germany, and took up their residence in Tregannon House. Scarcely three weeks had elapsed before he was recognized by the Leeds' constable in riding through Falmouth. He was then forced to reveal to his father-in-law this new danger that hung over him.

To his surprize the Attorney did not express any great astonishment or commiseration, but coolly told him he must quit the kingdom, proceed to France, and there reside till he could come to terms with the constable and buy him off.

Sir James and his astonished wife, who could not understand this new freak of her husband's, therefore hastily left Tregannon. She was to proceed with her own attendants to Dover, and embark for Calais, where Sir James

promised to join her ; this was all the explanation he gave, and they parted ; but her father told her that her husband's life was in danger and on no account to permit him to return to England, without he, Mr. Stonehenge, wrote to them to do so.

Lady Tregannon liked France ; she had passed through Paris on her previous journey into Germany ; she therefore felt quite satisfied at the prospect of residing in, and enjoying all the luxuries of, that gay city.

Thus at the period of our return at the opening of this chapter to Tregannon Mansion, it was only inhabited by Mr. Stonehenge, his wife and youngest daughter.

We now introduce our readers into the library of Tregannon House. It had struck the hour of ten at night, and Mr. Stonehenge sat at a table on which were many papers. There was a blazing coal fire in the grate, for it was a bitterly cold December night, and the blaze of the fire as it flashed upon the

rich gilding and ornaments of the very handsome room, gave a very comfortable look to the chamber, especially as a strong south-west gale, with occasional heavy showers beat against the windows. A shaded lamp stood upon the table, throwing its light on the papers lying before the Attorney.

Mr. Stonchenge seemed plunged in profound meditation; he was not the Mr. Stonchenge with the round, jovial, ruddy face introduced to our readers some five years back, when living on the marine parade, Plymouth, but haggard and careworn; his hair nearly white, with a canker worm at his heart, preying upon him and rendering his life, at times, almost a burden to him. He had bartered his peace of mind for gold, for though he often said to himself: 'I have committed no crime,' yet an inward monitor whispered: 'you have allowed another to do so, and aided him in escaping the punishment due to his guilt.'

The knowledge too that he had united his daughter to a man capable of any crime, at times tormented him, and yet, with all his astuteness, he knew but little of the terrible guilt of his titled son-in-law. Still the style and affluence in which he lived was dear to him—he could not give it up. No, he had sacrificed his peace sooner than give up the position, he was ready to plunge even into greater crime. Such is ever the consequence of yielding one single step to the tempter.

Mr. Stonehenge was roused from his reverie by the entrance of his old attendant, John, still a privileged domestic.

“Please, sir, there is a great big fellow below in a miner’s dress, insists on seeing you. I told him this was no time to come, and he told me to go to the devil and deliver his message.”

“Ah,” said Mr. Stonehenge with a forced smile, “they are a rough lot those miners; I

expected a captain of one of the mines this morning, and I suppose he could only come at this hour. Shew him in here; bring him up the private stairs."

"I don't think," remarked John with the privilege of an old domestic, "that he is a captain of a mine, he's a terrible rough fellow. I wanted to shut the door and leave him outside, but he pushed it back saying: 'he'd break every bone in my carcass if I didn't be off and deliver his message.'"

Mr. Stonehenge turned a little pale, saying—

"Do as I bid you—these men are rough, but honest."

John rubbed his nose, doubted, and departed. The master of Tregannou, for such he might fairly be styled, sighed, muttered something about old times, wished that he was still living on the Marine Parade, and had never picked up the crumpled piece of paper that had led to

his daughter's becoming Lady Tregannon, and the loss of his own peace of mind.

In the midst of these reflections, the door was thrown open, and John, ushered in the Cornish miner, with a look of considerable disgust. He was, in truth, a tall, powerful man, over six feet, and as John retired, he very deliberately walked to the door, opened it, and looked out into the corridor.

Mr. Stonehenge started and looked at his visitor with a very uncomfortable feeling. The man closed the door, and the key being inside, very deliberately locked it. The Attorney started up, saying, sharply—

“How is this? What means this liberty, to call it by no other name?”

“Oh, indeed,” said the visitor, with a laugh, “call it any other name you like, it wont offend me; you and I will soon understand each other.”

Mr. Stonehenge could only see the eyes of

the stranger, the rest of his face was hid beneath an immense red wollen wrapper, and his person covered by a long miner's frock, but the eyes he did see, met his with a glance that made the attorney quail, and without a word, he sank back into his chair.

The stranger unwound the wrapper and threw it aside, and pushing back the dark mass of hair that covered his forehead, disclosed the features of the man called Black George, whom we once before introduced to our readers on the moor above Charmouth and Lyme Regis.

“Who are you?” exclaimed Mr. Stonehenge, after regarding the stranger for a moment with fixed attention. “I have never seen you before. How is this—I expected a very different person.”

“You are right,” exclaimed the stranger, coolly seating himself, “I do not think you ever had that pleasure, but do not be alarmed,

I come here to serve you, as well as myself; in fact, the business I have with you requires great caution, and no eaves-droppers. I suppose you are aware that the child ——.”

At the mention of the word child, Mr. Stonehenge started from his chair, as if a congreve rocket, had burst beneath it. He stood gazing at his terrible visitor, for several moments, without the power to speak.

“You seem amazed, Mr. Stonehenge,” said Black George, with perfect composure, “at my mentioning the child—I mean, of course, the heir of Tregannon.”

The Attorney sat down, pale as death, the perspiration standing upon his forehead. Again as he looked at the man’s face he started, for its expression was entirely changed; he had, it seemed, some strange power over his features; he had pushed back the dark masses of hair from his high broad forehead—his brows no longer met, and a strange smile sat upon his

lip; he no longer looked ferocious, he even might be said to be a handsome man, of a peculiar stamp.

“You seem, Mr. Stonehenge,” resumed the stranger, “to be either bewildered or to wish to appear so. Now, it is absolutely necessary that we should understand each other before we part. Let me ask you, first of all—did you really suppose the body of the child, found in the River Fal, was that of the late Sir Henry Claude Tregannon’s son.”

Wiping the perspiration from his forehead, Mr. Stonehenge, in a very agitated voice, said—

“What other supposition could I have; every one considered the body found to be the lost child’s—whose elses could it be?”

“Oh, as to whose child it was,” interrupted the stranger, with his keen eyes bent upon the Attorney, “that’s easily answered—the child was mine!”

“Good God!” exclaimed the miserable Mr.

Stonehenge, who really was deceived in considering the body found to be the young heir's. He certainly knew his son-in-law stole the child, but James Tregannon told him that in crossing the river, the crazy punt upset, and that, with great difficulty, he saved his own and his wife's life, but that the child he could not save.

Whether the Attorney thought he wilfully let the child be drowned, we cannot say, but he assuredly thought he *was drowned*; therefore, when his unknown visitor asserted that the body found was that of his own child, he felt a cruel pang of bitter disappointment, for he naturally supposed that the heir of Tregannon still lived, and that he had perilled body and soul for nothing but to plunge, perhaps, into greater crime.

Such were Mr. Stonehenge's thoughts, as he sat facing his cool and perfectly unconcerned visitor, who read, with ease, what was passing in the Attorney's mind.

"All this," said Mr. Stonehenge, making an

effort to recover himself, "overpowers me. When Sir James Tregannon married my daughter, I considered him the undoubted heir to this property. He was guilty of a great crime in stealing the child."

The attorney fidgetted in his chair, for he felt that the eyes of the stranger were searching every corner of his heart.

"Oh!" interrupted the visitor, in a dry, sneering tone, "if you want me to imagine that you are an injured and innocent man, you are quite mistaken. You are equally guilty with my worthy friend in consenting to rob—yes, rob, that's the word; it's an ugly one, certainly, but it's plain and easily understood. In consenting to hide the guilt of your estimable son-in-law, and rob the heir of Tregannon of his rights, you became equally guilty; the law makes little difference between the conniver at imposture and the perpetrator. If your conscience smites you, say so, and in three

days I will produce the heir of Tregannon, and make terms for myself."

As he said these words he rose from his chair.

"Stay!" said Mr. Stonehenge, in a tone of great excitement. "Man or devil, which ever you are, do you want to ruin and hang us all?"

"Certainly not," resumed the man, reseating himself; "don't talk of hanging—it's unpleasant. I've had a long, stormy walk, and would willingly drink a glass of wine, brandy, or any other liquor, to your good health and our future intercourse, for we must pull together; and when you know all, you will admit that I have been cursedly ill-treated."

"Very good," returned the attorney, making a great effort to recover himself, and getting up, he opened a handsome garde-de-vin, and took out two richly-cut decanters full of spirits; these, and a curious antique glass, he placed on the table before his guest, saying, "Help

yourself—I will listen to what you have to say.”

“Come, this is doing the thing handsome. Splendid cut glass. No doubt the liquor is excellent,” pouring out, as he spoke, nearly half a pint of pure brandy, which he swallowed without the slightest inconvenience. “A good and wholesome spirit,” continued Black George; “it warms me after four hours’ exposure to torrents of rain. I forgot to drink your health, but will do so next glass. Now, Mr. Stonehenge, to make things clear to you, and prove to you that I am acting fairly for both parties, I must trouble you with a short sketch of my early intercourse with the present Sir James Tregannon.”

But this brief sketch must be given in our next chapter.

CHAPTER VIII.

“ABOUT ten or eleven years ago,” began Black George, “I first met your son-in-law; it was on the Exeter race-course. He was then a very young man, four or five years my junior. Who I am, or what my real name may be, it is quite unnecessary to inform you. I frequented the same society as James Tregannon. He kept three race-horses at this time, and backed them enormously and inconsiderately; he also played high. Our first meeting was at a gaming-table on the race-course, under a tent. I won a large

sum from him. We soon became very intimate, and knowing that he would lose in the coming race, I taught him a way to save himself from his injudicious bets. We need not, however, follow up our further acquaintance at this period. Three years after he was tried for forgery. Had he followed my advice, he would never have been suspected. However, through your means, he was acquitted.

“The next time we met was in Manchester; we were both married, and dame fortune had reduced us both to the lowest ebb. Some transactions I undertook in London, which did not exactly prosper, forced me to fly to the provinces. I could disguise myself in various ways, personate almost any character, and always had a singular power over my features, so that in one second I could so change the expression of my face as almost to defy detection.”

As Black George said these words, Mr.

Stonehenge looked up and almost sprang from his chair with a startled surprise. His visitor's face was fearfully changed. His nose, which was rather a large one, but straight and well-formed, was now twisted upwards, disclosing the nostrils, and completely distorting the countenance. One eye had disappeared, leaving only the white to be seen; altogether the effect was surprising and most unpleasant to behold. A hearty laugh from the attorney's strange guest restored his face to its usual appearance.

“You see, my good friend, you would be puzzled to swear to my identity, eh? That's only a trifling change, but enough to show you that with the help of dress I could baffle a Bow Street Runner.” He then continued, “I soon found out that James Tregannon and his wife were leagued with a gang of coiners. The men coined the false money, and the women passed it in the great towns. I

joined this gang, and we should have made a very lucrative business of it but for one of our number turning informer.

“James Tregannon and I went with our wives to Leeds; we were not successful there; we were completely blown upon, and nearly caught by half a score constables in a well planned scheme of mine; had we succeeded, we intended to have fled the country, so hot was the pursuit after Smith (that was your son-in-law’s *alias*) and myself. After these failures we joined a gang of gipsy tinkers. I had tried this dodge before, and was wide awake to their ways; but my friend was new to the trade—did not understand their slang, and was a shade too proud for soldering tin saucepans. At the expiration of three months, James Tregannon and his wife left us—I liked the life well enough and remained with the gang. I got a new name amongst the tinkers, from my black beard, which I kept long, and a thick coat of soot to hide my complexion.

“Time rolled on, and in the course of our peregrinations about twenty of us, in gangs, travelled into Cornwall; we each had a donkey or two, and a small tent; those that were unmarried herded together. I need not tell you we were not always employed soldering kettles. In fact we led a very jovial life, I assure you, and lived well, thanks to the neighbouring preserves, and farm-yards, for we always selected a proper situation for our encampments, and had divers ways of communicating with each other.

“We encamped about two miles from Truro, at a mile or so distant from each other. At this time I had an only child, as fair and handsome a boy as any in the land—he was about three years old. One evening, very late, I was astonished at beholding James Tregannon and his wife approaching our tent; he looked miserably haggard, and his wife worse. She always drank hard; her passion for gin was her ruin. We had a long conference, but it will be sufficient to tell you that the result was

that I struck my tent, and agreed to accompany him into the vicinity of Tregannon House, keeping the opposite side of the river where the country is very thinly populated, and for miles thickly wooded.

“James Tregannon’s plan was to steal the only son of his uncle, Sir Henry Tregannon. He explained to me the infirmities his uncle laboured under, and declared that the loss of the child would cause the Baronet’s death; that he would then be the next heir to the Tregannon estate—and offered me five thousand pounds to proceed to America with the child, on my taking a fearful oath never to reveal to any human being the child’s name. I jumped at this proposal, because I thought it possible a very large reward would be offered for the recovery of the child. Even if it did not kill the Baronet, which I very much doubted, the five thousand pounds would enable me to quit this country and settle in America; to do which I was very anxious.

“The difficulty was to steal the child without incurring detection. This James Tregannon declared he could do, as he had for weeks been planning the affair, and had a place of concealment on the opposite side of the river, and an old shooting punt, in a muddy creek, that could be made available for crossing. Accordingly, I set out with my wife and child, and arriving at the place appointed, set up my tent on the borders of a little creek that the tide from the Fal ran into, and which was dry at low water. The shooting punt I patched up as well as I could. Within half-a-mile of us, James Tregannon and his wife took up their abode in a rather singular cave; I think it must have been the shaft of an old mine. He and his wife every day crossed the river, and lay concealed near Tregannon Park, waiting for a favourable opportunity to accomplish their purpose. I sometimes rambled as far as St. Justs or St. Mawes, doing a small job here and

there. Tinkering requires very little genius, and few tools.

“One day, on my return from St. Justs, on entering my tent, I found my wife drunk and fast asleep, but the little boy was not there; thinking he might be with Tregannon’s wife in the cave, I went there—they were absent—I became alarmed—I ran back to the creek, from which I knew the tide ran violently. I do not wish, Mr. Stonehenge to excite your sympathy; I am a man of crime, and one hard to soften, but that hour of my life in which I strove to find my child, for I tracked his little feet on the mud on the borders of the creek, was the bitterest I ever passed—I have never been the same man since—I have become more hardened and reckless. However, all I need say on this subject is, I never saw my child again—neither have I ever forgiven his mother. She was drunk, and the child, I suppose, went out to the water’s edge, and in trying, perhaps, to reach something floating, overreached him-

self, fell in, and was carried away by the ebbing tide.

“Three days after, James Tregannon succeeded in stealing the Baronet’s heir, and getting it, without detection, to the cave. I went to St. Mawes the next day, leaving my wife in the cave with the Tregannons, lying close, while I went for provisions.

“On returning, I came round through St. Justs, and going into an ale house for a pint of beer, was utterly astounded on hearing some people talking about the death of Sir Henry Claude Tregannon. Had James Tregannon deceived me, and murdered his uncle!”

Mr. Stonehenge shook as if with ague, and looked at Black George with an expression of intense anxiety.

“Such was my first impression,” continued the Attorney’s companion. “I have said I am a man of crime and sin, but as yet no man’s blood lies at my door. I would not, for the Baronet’s wealth, have been an accomplice in

his murder. As the conversation went on, I found I had wronged James Tregannon. The Baronet had poisoned himself by mistaking a dose of some poison or other he was in the habit of taking for an illness he had. Here was a sudden piece of intelligence for James Tregannon. I therefore hurried back to the cave, and informed them both of the news I had heard.

“‘I told you,’ said James Tregannon, with a curious kind of laugh, ‘that he would be sure to die or kill himself after the loss of the child.’

“‘I did not like this view of the case; it was a second-hand way of committing murder. If he knew his uncle would poison himself in despair he was guilty of his death—I told him so—but he laughed at me, saying—

“‘I fear your conscience is too tender to accept my offer of the five thousand pounds—do you wish to draw back?’

“‘Certainly not,’ I replied; ‘my part of

the business is the taking care of the child—I will perform my part, if you will perform yours.’

“ ‘The day I become Sir James Tregannon,’ he said, ‘you shall receive the five thousand pounds, and then you leave this country for America.’

“ Now I expected a deal of trouble with the child. He appeared a fiery little fellow, and his beauty was remarkable. We stripped him and dressed him in some of my child’s clothes, blacked his face with some walnut juice and soot, and then myself and wife left the place, always travelling at night. Tregannon and his wife staid behind in the cave.

“ Some time would elapse before he would become possessed of the estates; he was not at all afraid of ever being recognized as the coiner and burglar Smith, for none of his former companions knew his real name except myself—and it was not at all likely any one would ever think of identifying Smith

and Sir James Tregannon as one and the same person, even if a likeness was perceptible. He intended to go abroad for a year or two, and the great change there would be in his person and appearance would, he thought, baffle even the eyes of his old companions; but he was deceived, as you already know."

"How do you know that?" demanded Mr. Stonehenge, in a tone of surprise, "you have not seen Sir James!"

"I saw him seven weeks ago," returned Black George; "but let me finish. My narrative already occupies too much time. I waited very patiently several months, thinking Sir James would fulfil his contract, but I had no intelligence from him. I left my wife and the boy in a safe place, and travelled back here. It was then I heard about the finding of the body of the late Baronet's child, and that it was recognized by its garments, and also by several of the domestics.

"It struck me at once, that the body found

was my child's, and that James Tregannon and his wife had discovered the body after my departure, and dressed it in the young heir's clothes. It was a deep ruse ; but I felt pleased that my poor child received christian burial. I also discovered that James Tregannon was in Germany with his wife—your daughter. I was amazed—for I did not know he had lost his first wife. Thus there was no chance of my five thousand pounds till he should come back from Germany—for, recollect, I was not aware of the true nature of your connection with him at that time."

Mr. Stonehenge did not venture to look up, so Black George continued, with a grim smile at the silent Attorney—

"Until the child should lose all memory of the past, we were forced to live and pitch our tents in remote and thinly inhabited districts. I was compelled to be cruel to the boy to break his spirit, and by keeping him in our tent, he gradually began to speak with a strange hesi-

tation of manner ; still it would not do, for two or three years, to let him out of my wife's sight. At last, I heard that Sir James Tregannon and his lady had returned to their estate. This was not however till two months after they had returned ; and, by the time I got into Cornwall, I heard the news of his and his lady's departure again for the continent ; and the strange rumour, that he was suspected of having committed an act, for which he was forced to leave the country. That a constable from Leeds had publicly said—he could swear to Sir James Tregannon having at one time gone under the name of Smith, and that the said Smith belonged to a gang of coiners and burglars, who, some years back, infested the towns of Leeds, Manchester, and Birmingham. However, as Sir James was not to be found, the charge against him remained unproved. A great many people believed that the constable spoke the truth ; some who knew but little of my worthy friend, said it was absurd nonsense to accuse a

gentleman of such a crime because he happened to be like a man named Smith. At all events, I saw no chance of my five thousand pounds; and as he had not fulfilled his contract, I began to turn it in my brain how I might make the most of my secret.

“I returned to my wife, and the first thing I did was to take some gunpowder, and, with a needle, punctured in the boy’s left shoulder the three letters—H. C. T., and under them the date 178—. This I did that I might know the boy, should I chance to lose him. As long as he lives he will carry that mark, in some shape or other, on his shoulder.

“I thus passed over nearly four years, rambling through various counties, not exactly knowing how to act with respect to the boy, for I did not know whether his relations would believe my story, or, which was the safest way of informing them.

“At this time, just as I had made up my mind to apply by letter to Lady Trecastle, for

I was well acquainted with the boy's history, and the whereabouts of his sisters, having learned all this from James Tregannon, I joined a party of my old associates going into Dorsetshire.

“I pitched my tent on a dreary moor not very far from Charmouth and Lyme Regis, and some ten or twelve of our gang located themselves a few miles apart. We intended to do a little business on the king's high-way, that mode of ‘raising the wind’ becoming fashionable again.

“We heard of a good catch, one night, in a gentleman who was returning to his mansion, near Lyme Regis, with nearly eight hundred pounds in his gig. We determined to stop him, but a comrade of mine, rather a wayward kind of devil, insisted upon robbing the Axminster heavy stage, as one of our spies had gained intelligence that the rich butcher's wife at Axminster was returning from Bridport,

with a couple of hundred pounds—I was against this but was overruled.”

Mr. Stonehenge shuddered as he ventured a timid glance at the strange guest he was thus suddenly associated with, who, however, now and then filled his glass and went on quite coolly with his narrative.

“We stopped the coach, and taking one of the lamps, I pulled the door open, and mounted the steps. As I did so, I saw the muzzle of a pistol within an inch of my head, but, at the same moment, the light of the lamp fell full upon the face of the individual holding the pistol. I beheld James Tregannon; a few words from me caused him to leap out of the coach, and leaving my comrades to complete their job, we walked on towards Charmouth.

“I suppose, Mr. Stonehenge,” continued Black George, in a tone that forced that individual to look him in the face, “I need not

repeat to you all the conversation I had with my old comrade. In his own vindication, he declared that he was completely in your hands."

The Attorney turned pale, and quailed under the keen inquisitive glance of the robber.

"That you had it in your power to silence the Leeds' constable, but ——"

"On my honour," eagerly interrupted Mr. Stonehenge, "he wrongs me. I wrote him many letters on the subject, telling him it would be madness to tamper with this man, for, to offer to purchase his silence, would be to declare Sir James guilty, whereas, I have treated the whole affair with contempt, but still it forces him to live abroad, and, in fact, I cannot see how he could live at home; after the unfortunate acts he committed in his youth, he would be shut out from all society."

"Humph!" muttered the robber, "perhaps

so, but he says he cannot live on the amount you remit him."

"Cannot live," repeated the Attorney, his face the colour of scarlet, "not live on five thousand a-year, for a few years, till his immense debts are paid off. He is a madman, receiving five thousand a-year and not entitled to a shilling."

"Ha! I see," interrupted the highwayman.

"The plain matter-of-fact is this :—" and he spoke in a cool determined voice : "Three men join together to commit a great crime—Sir James Tregannon, Mr. Stonehenge, and your humble servant. The first gains a title and five thousand a-year, admitted. The second lives in a splendid mansion, with a train of domestics, and handles the amount between five thousand and fourteen thousand a-year. The third, running the greatest risk, with the burden of the stolen child on his hands, wanders about and earns his bread as

a travelling tinker, and at times, a robber. Do not interrupt me, sir," continued Black George, with his terrible look, that made the Attorney quail, "I have nearly finished. Now I ask you a plain question. When three men unite to commit an act by which a great gain is made, is it usual that only two profit by it?"

The man paused.

Mr. Stonchenge now experienced the consequences of crime, not exactly for the first time, but he felt that, henceforth, there would be neither security or peace, and, in his own mind, he came to a sudden resolution; however, he looked up and said, calmly enough—

"I admit you have not been fairly treated, it was not my fault, Sir James ought to have made provision for his contract with you."

"Well," impatiently interrupted Black George, putting his hand into his pocket and pulling out a folded paper; the Attorney eyeing his proceedings with a wary eye, "Sir James, it seems, ventured from Paris to this

country, to have an interview with you. I do not want to know anything about your private affairs; he was going to Lyme Regis, to hire a boat to take him to Guernsey; we went together to Charmouth, and he hired a fishing-smack to take him to that place, and I saw him sail. Before he departed I insisted on his giving me an order on you for the sum of six thousand pounds."

"Six thousand pounds!" repeated Mr. Stonehenge, with a start; "I understood your agreement was for five thousand!"

"True—but I have waited four years for it; during those four years I might have doubled that sum in America, therefore, I insisted on six thousand pounds. How much do you think Mr. and Mrs. Bond would give for my secret?"

"Mr. and Mrs. Bond, of Grange House," exclaimed the Attorney, in a tone of intense alarm, as he fixed his eyes upon the undisturbed features of the robber.

“The same,” returned Black George, enjoying the alarmed look of the Master of Tregannon.

“Mrs. Bond is the child’s aunt, and they are very wealthy.”

“How soon must you have this money?” questioned Mr. Stonehenge, in a low, hesitating voice.

“There is a ship in Plymouth Sound,” said the robber, “will sail for America to-morrow fortnight; I wish to embark in her, and quit this country for ever, and I will give you my oath in any manner you please that from my lips the secret of the boy’s existence shall never be revealed. There is Sir James’s order for the sum I mentioned,” throwing the paper upon the table, “and I think, when you consider the part I have performed, and have to perform, you will acknowledge I am the the worst paid of the three.”

Anxious to get rid of his most unwelcome visitor, Mr. Stonehenge said—

“In three, say four days hence, I shall be ready with the money.”

“Very good,” said Black George, rising, “I shall be here punctually.”

Mr. Stonehenge summoned his man John, who, with looks of considerable surprise, conducted the captain of the mine, as he was led to consider him, without the mansion, wishing him a pleasant walk home—a deluge of rain and sleet was pouring down at the time.

CHAPTER XI.

WE pass over a period of eight years, since the events recorded in our last chapter, a long period apparently to look forward to, but a mere nothing to plunge back into the past, for mind and thought travel with lightning speed.

Time had rolled on during those eight years, laying many in the tomb, bringing others to its brink, and letting childhood spring into youth, and youth into manhood.

We open our present chapter then in the spring of the year 18'—, and find ourselves

after this lapse of time in the pleasant and happy mansion of Grange House; there was no change there in external appearance; all was smiling and beautiful under the influence of a bountiful Providence, and a good and kind landlord.

The wide spread lawn was throwing up its emerald colours; the noble trees were opening their buds into leaves, and the wide and glorious sea was rippling and sparkling, covered with barks, in the unclouded glories of a young May morning.

Mr. and Mrs. Bond, but lightly touched by the passage of those eight years, were seated in their favourite sitting-room, which commanded the bay and town of Lyme Regis, the windows were open, for the day was very beautiful, considering that the climate was England and the month May. Mr. Bond had his telescope in hand, he was gazing through it, out upon the rippling sea, from vessel to vessel he pointed his glass—till at last it rested on a beautiful

cutter yacht coming up in short tacks from the Bill of Portland, under all the sail she could crowd. She was beating up for Lyme, with a steady south west wind.

“ Ah ! there she is, Ellen,” said Mr. Bond, turning the glass towards his fair partner ; “ She sails like a witch ; and that dear boy handles her like a top. I must send William with the horses to meet him ; he will reach in by the time they are there.”

So saying, Mr. Bond rose up and rang the bell, and forthwith ordered the groom to saddle Mr. Henry’s favourite horse, and proceed to Lyme, and wait the yacht’s arrival.

“ There is our friend Parks coming up the lawn,” said Mrs. Bond ; “ he told us yesterday if he had to leave for London to night he would be here early, hoping to see Henry before his departure. I am glad, therefore, to see the yacht in sight.”

“ Ah ! confound the law,” muttered Mr. Bond, as he left the room ; “ Parks gives the

thing up. The last consultation of lawyers settled the case; they all agreed that they firmly believed Harry to be the heir of Tre-gannon; but notwithstanding the resemblance and the letters tattooed on his shoulder, and the boy's own memory of the past, the case would not do to bring into a law court. Thank God, your blessed—I beg your pardon, my love, for though he is a scoundrel, he is still your nephew—but thank God, he cannot get a fraction out of the estate during his life—a devil of a mess his rascally attorney got him into.”

So saying, Mr. Bond sallied out of the front door, and walked down the avenue to meet Mr. Parks, who came slowly up, reading a letter, and stopping every now and then to consider what he was reading.

“ Well, I suppose you are off to-night for the great metropolis, Parks,” said Mr. Bond, after a hearty shake of the hand, “ there's the ‘ Water Witch,’ beating up for the harbour,

Harry will be just in time to see you before your departure, as you hinted you may not be back for some months."

"Yes," returned Mr. Parks, "I saw the boat before I left the house. I am very glad that I shall see Harry, but do you know I have received, by this morning's post, a most extraordinary letter, in a female hand; here it is. By Jupiter, I do not know what to make of it."

"What's it about?" asked Mr. Bond.

"Read it, old friend, read it, it's no secret—a nice pretty hand is it not?"

Mr. Bond took the letter, and with some curiosity cast his eyes upon the writing. Using our privilege, we look over his shoulder and give our readers the contents of the letter, which was written in a fair small hand.

"SIR,

"On the point of quitting the shores of my native land, most probably for

ever, I feel, in my heart, I cannot do so, without easing my mind and conscience of a secret that oppresses me, and renders life almost painful; and yet there are reasons which prevent my disclosing this secret to you, in a manner that might render the disclosure infinitely more beneficial to the party whom it concerns. Still, if it does nothing else, it will relieve the minds of those generous individuals, Mr. and Mrs. Bond, from all doubt with respect to the child they have so nobly protected and cherished.

“I solemnly assure you, that the boy they received under their roof, and to whom they have given their name, is the only son and heir of the late Sir Henry Claude Tregannon, consequently their own nephew. The ill-fated boy was stolen from his home by James Tregannon and his first wife, and secreted in a cave for several days. This cave is, I believe, on the other side of the river to Tregannon House, about a mile down the stream, and close

to a narrow muddy creek that the tide runs up. The child was then consigned over into the hands of a man, his name at that time I knew not, but at the period I discovered this secret he called himself Black George; he was an old comrade of James Tregannon's. This man was under the disguise of a gipsy tinker, he was to have five thousand pounds for taking the child to America on swearing never to reveal his name.

“The body of the child found and buried as the son of Sir Henry Tregannon, was the son of this man, Black George, which had been accidentally drowned. James Tregannon and his wife finding the face and person of the child much mutilated and disfigured, dressed it in the garments of the unfortunate heir of Tregannon and as such it was buried. The man, Black George, with gunpowder and some composition, punctured on the stolen child's shoulder, the letters “H. C. T.” and the year, and date.

“This man I understood sailed from Plymouth in the American bark, the Independence, bound for New York. For several years I considered that he had taken the child with him, and that he could never be traced, and only a few months ago, discovered that the boy was actually under the roof of his own aunt, and that you sir, and several eminent lawyers were about to bring his case into a court of law, and dispute the title of the present possessor of the estates. If therefore this statement, to which, unhappily, I cannot affix my name, will serve the cause of the much wronged heir of Tregannon, in my heart I thank God that I have made it, if not, I must only console myself with the reflection that I have done all I dare do under the circumstances in which I am placed. I can only sign myself.

“A SINCERE LOVER OF TRUTH AND JUSTICE”

Mr. Bond read the letter from beginning to

end, without pause or remark ; having finished, he looked into the benevolent face of his friend Parks, saying—

“This is singular enough ; who on earth do you suppose wrote this letter.”

“I have not the slightest idea, my good friend, but although I believe every word in it, I am sorry to say it would do no good to our cause. It would be called conspiracy, an anonymous letter is worthless. It bears the Cork post mark, therefore the writer is either in Ireland or has sailed thence by this time. It's altogether very singular.”

“By Jove, Parks, there is one part of the letter may be turned to use.”

“Whats that ?”

“Why, Henry and I will have a trip into Cornwall, and have a hunt after that cave. Who knows what may turn up there.”

“True, it will be worth while, and can do no harm. By-the-bye in a letter I had this

morning from Saunders, he says : ‘ that Stonehenge and his family succeeded in reaching Liverpool, and were just seven hours under weigh for America, when the party in chase reached Liverpool.’ ”

“ How much was it,” demanded Mr. Bond in a musing tone, “ that he contrived to raise in the name of James Tregannon ?”

“ Fifty thousand pounds,” returned Mr. Parks as they continued their walk round the lawn, “ it will take eight or nine years and more to clear the estate. The creditors have agreed to allow that villain, James Tregannon, a thousand a year till the amount raised in his name is paid off ; I do not quite understand how the thing was done, for though James Tregannon did actually authorise the raising of this sum, I cannot understand for what purpose, or what could induce this Stonehenge, who lived at Tregannon as its master, to rob his employer and to escape with his plunder to

America. By Jove you have just put an idea into my head—Stonehenge had two daughters, had he not ?”

“He had, or has,” returned Mr. Bond, “what then ?”

“Why, it was a female that wrote this letter, and she states she was leaving her native land, and situated as she was, she could not give her name; by Jove, it’s not at all unlikely, but that Miss Stonehenge wrote it, especially as it could do her father no manner of injury.”

“But my good friend, this letter bears the Cork post mark, and quite a recent date, and you know Stonehenge must have sailed from Liverpool more than two months ago, at the least.”

The lawyer looked puzzled, and remained silently pondering over something. Mr. Bond cast a look over the sea, and then exclaimed—

“Ha! The Water Witch will run in this

tack ; how vexed Harry would have been, if little Fan had left before his return."

"By-the-way I do not think I should have been able to induce little Fan to leave," said Mr. Parks, "without Harry returned to bid her good-bye ; she has been in a state of fever looking out for the yacht ; and see, she is coming in at the lodge-gate, with her bonnet hanging by its ribbons like the pennon of a king's ship, and my niece, Margaret, trying to keep up with her ; I knew she would follow me, to be the first to see Harry—I never saw a child so attached and so affectionate in my life as Fan is to him—there is not a day since she has been staying with us, that she does not talk of Harry's devotion in risking his life in that terrible storm, to save hers ; though only thirteen year old, she has at times the thoughts and ideas of sixteen, and yet with all as wild as a fawn."

As Mr. Parks spoke one of nature's loveliest creations came bounding over the lawn to-

wards them. The breeze had blown the bonnet from her head, but it was still held on by the ribbon round her neck—a profusion of rich auburn hair in natural ringlets was streaming in the breeze. She was tall for her age, her round Hebe face was full of health, of life and joyous youth. Her dark blue eyes sparkled with animation, as bounding up to Mr. Bond, she almost sprang into his arms saying—

“ Ah! after all here’s Harry and the yacht, so I shall not have to go away without a good-bye. I saw the yacht first, and you,” turning to Mr. Parks, “ wanted to persuade me it was a Weymouth fishing smack, as if I didn’t know every sail and rope in her.”

“ You’re a mad cap, Fan,” said Mr. Parks laughing, “ I knew the boat as well as you, but I wanted to get the start of you here, for I was sure once you got here that tongue of yours would banish all matters of business.”

Mr. Bond, after kissing the beautiful girl’s fair open forehead, turned to Miss Parks, a very

handsome and amiable girl, though no longer in her first youth: "well, Miss Margaret, I see keeping up with your fair companion has added additional bloom to your cheek; it's a glorious day, is it not?"

"Oh! lovely," said Miss Parks, "I have been envying Harry his cruize from Weymouth; but as to keeping Fan in the house, after she got a glimpse of the 'Water Witch,' was out of the question, she bounded off like a mad thing."

Fan laughed, and seeing Mrs. Bond coming out to meet them, she ran to her to talk about Harry's coming.

While waiting the arrival of young Harry Bond as he was universally called by all who knew the family, we will acquaint our readers who the young and beautiful girl we have just introduced to them, and how she came to be so much attached to Harry Bond, and also how she came to be under the roof of Mr. Parks, who was in no way related to her.

CHAPTER X.

AT this period Henry Bond as we must continue to style our hero for awhile, was in his eighteenth year. Every pains had been bestowed upon his education, and his abilities were great. He was returning from the vicinity of Weymouth, where he resided with a Mr. Woodhouse, who received half-a-dozen young gentlemen into his house to prepare them for one of the universities.

Within a few weeks of completing his studies with Mr. Woodhouse, the terrible fever that

in the following year committed such fearful ravages on that coast, broke out in the village adjoining Mr. Woodhouse's establishment, and two of the young gentlemen were attacked, and one died. Mr. Bond at once sent the yacht to Weymouth to bring Henry home.

He was as handsome and noble-looking a youth as any in the kingdom—tall and graceful—uniting great strength with immense activity; he excelled in all sports of the field—was a prodigious favourite with all the country gentlemen, for there was not a fox-hunter in Dorsetshire could compete with him. But though he loved the chase, the sea was his favourite element. From his very first introduction into the family of the kind-hearted Bonds, he showed a predilection for the sea, and, in two or three years, the passion grew stronger and stronger. At fourteen, his feats with boats and in sailing the "Water Witch," astonished the hardy pilots and fishermen of Lyme and Charmouth.

Before he was sixteen, he had saved many lives from shipwreck by his daring, which continually filled the minds of his uncle and aunt with admiration and fear.

On the completion of his fifteen year, one of his tutors, a Mr. Otley, a young man of delicate health, and who had recently been appointed to the vicarage of St. Mary's in the Scilly Islands, was on a visit at Mr. Bond's. A few days previous to his departure, Henry proposed taking him to St. Mary's in the "Water Witch," and the offer being warmly seconded by Mr. Bond, they sailed on the 27th of September, with the wind blowing fresh from the eastward, making a fine run as far as the Land's End, when the wind shifted, with evident symptoms of a terrific storm. Nevertheless, the "Water Witch" made her port the evening of the second day after leaving Land's End, against a strong head-wind and heavy sea. The three following days, it blew a hurricane at sou'-west, with a tremendous

sea, accompanied with much thunder and lightning. The fifth day there appeared a lull, and the wind drawing more to the westward, Henry, after an affectionate leave-taking of his tutor, sailed for home, though most of the old pilots declared they were on the eve of a rougher gale from the south-east or east.

“It’s only forty miles or so to Penzance,” said Henry, “a mere three hours run with this wind; and I do not think we shall have the gale so soon as all that.”

The sea was still greatly agitated, and a tremendous ground swell ran in on those fearful rocks, where perished the gallant Sir Cloudesley Shovel and his noble ships. For two hours the “Water Witch” ran with a fair but very light breeze some eight or ten miles, when it fell stark calm, with a slight fog, and a heavy lowering sky.

“We are sure to catch it, Master Harry, some time to-night,” said Mr. Seabright, the skipper of the yacht, an old man-of-war’s

man and thorough seaman, and who had been a great favourite with Mr. Bond for many years.

“Well, my old friend, if we do catch it,” said Henry Bond, in reply to the observation of the old skipper, “we must grin and bear it; it’s not the first gale the old girl has sprinkled her decks in.”

“No, please God, Master Harry, nor the last I hope. But this here channel is a ticklish sort of a place to be lying in with such a tumble of a sea, and a threatening sky overhead. It would be just as well to lower our main-sail, secure our boom, which is knocking about at a precious rate, and set our try-sail, we shall then be snug for the night whatever comes.”

“I am quite of your opinion, William,” said Henry, who always gave way to the old tar’s wishes, as he knew he was not only a first-rate seaman, but as hardy and daring a one as need be, when circumstances required it.

It was near sun-set, the yacht was rolling heavily in a rapidly increasing sea, and a thick dense fog lay upon the face of the water, but not a breath of air was stirring. The great boom of the cutter was soon secured, her try-sail hoisted, her bowsprit run in, and a second gib set, so that come what might they would at least not be caught napping.

Our hero retired to the handsome cabin of the yacht, and invited the skipper to a cup of tea, or a glass of grog, for the old salt generally entertained his favourite with a yarn of some kind, either one of his own adventures or one that he had heard.

Mr. Seabright preferred a stiff glass of grog to a cup of tea.

“Well, William,” said Henry, as he sat with his tea equipage, secured on the table, for the yacht rolled heavily at times, “we are not likely to have a breeze before morning.”

“It’s mortal thick and hazy,” said the old seaman, mixing his potation. “There’s no

trusting this here place, no more than my old cruising ground, the gulf of Lyons—you may run in in the morning under royals, and be deuced glad to be scudding out before night, under a storm stay-sail, or lose your masts, as we did in the old brig.

“You never told me about that adventure, William. I like to hear all kinds of yarns; tell me how you lost your masts in the stormy gulf of Lyons.”

“With all my heart, Master Harry, though it's not much of a yarn—though I nearly lost my life at the time, but here goes.”

And swallowing half the contents of the tumbler, the old seaman began—

“I was about five or six and twenty at this time, and was then a seaman on board the ‘Spitfire,’ ten gun brig, though them their craft were not thought much of, being dangerous and uncomfortable for the crew, yet the little ‘Spitfire’ was a jolly little craft of her kind, with good beam, stood up to her

canvas like a crutch, and sailed like a witch—perhaps she was rather overmasted. Her captain was as good a seaman as ever stepped on board a three-decker—he had a smart crew, and all pulled well together. We were sent to cruize, by Captain R—— of the Thunderer, the commander on the station off the gulf of Lyons, to keep a look out for three French ships, thought to be lying under Fort G——, where a number of gun boats were kept.

“ Well, it was the month of September, and the weather was clear and fine. Our Captain resolved to stand into the Gulf till within sight of Fort G——. There was a bright blue sky, and a nice light breeze from the south west. We stood into the Gulf, under topgallant sails, and royals, making about eight knots an hour. We were just abreast of Cape Antoine about six miles off when we saw a small speck of a cloud settle on the high point of the Cape, and in a minute it grew as big as our mainsail, and then disappeared.

Our Captain was walking the deck, with his telescope in hand, and at times looking beyond the Cape. Suddenly he called out—

“ ‘Away aloft, and furl the royals, and topgallant-sails.’

“ I was one of the number that ran aloft ; my eyes, just as I reached the topgallant-yard, I saw coming out of the Gulf, like a race horse, a white squall ; the sea was a sheet of snow white foam, tossed wildly into the air ; all hands were called upon deck, but before the stunsails were taken in, or the topgallant-sails furled, the white squall was upon us. Crack went the booms, then the topgallant-masts ; the brig taken aback, heeled over fearfully, till her yards touched the foaming water, unfortunately for me, I was slipping down a rope, and the sudden heel over threw me off my hold and pitched me into the foaming waters ; hen coops and all kinds of things were hurled in by those who saw me fall overboard ; the next moment crack went the

brig's foremast and fore-stay, and then the mainmast and all its gear, such a tremendous squall I believe none aboard ever witnessed. As for myself, for the moment, I was stupified; but as I rose to the surface, I came against a very large hencoop, which I grasped and clung to, with the hold of an oyster, rolling over and over two or three times, till I got astride on it; I could'nt see a yard before me; I did not know then that the brig had lost both her masts, for the sea resembled a snow drift. I was aware that these white squalls of the Mediterranean seldom lasted beyond half an hour or so, it's their first blast that does the mischief, often not only unmasting vessels, but often turning them over, and causing them to founder; I held on like grim death, Master Harry—it was no joke. The wind was terrific and the sea like a cauldron of boiling water; but in twenty minutes or so the great fury of the squall passed on, and in ten minutes more I lay rolling and tossing on the sea, with

scarcely as much wind as would serve to fill a skysail. I could see the squall on before me, and you may imagine how eagerly I looked to get a sight of the brig; but no brig was to be seen. In half an hour more I lay upon my hencoop, the sea as calm as a sleeping infant, the sky perfectly unclouded, and the sun shining as pleasantly as if no squall had occurred.

“I soon began to find my berth on the hencoop rather a doubtful one for passing the night on. I did not altogether despair; but I must confess I had little hope of rescue; for the crew no doubt thought I had perished, and not a single sail could I see over the vast extent of ocean. To me the land was invisible, though only fourteen miles distant. The sea, luckily, was as smooth as a mirror, and my craft, the hencook, was over twenty feet long, the least roll of a sea would have forced me to keep half my body in the water, thereby tempting some hungry shark to make a meal of it.

When the sun set, the wind came out from the Spanish coast, but only a pleasant night breeze. I was not cold, though occasionally my feet to the knees remained in the water. As hour after hour passed, I wondered if I should be able to hold on till daylight, still I trusted in Providence, determined to struggle to the last.

“About four or five hours after sunset, I fancied I beheld two or three white objects like sails between me and the land. It struck me that they might be the French gun boats I knew were lying at anchor under the batteries of Fort G——. They often put to sea at night to have a look out at early dawn. They were latine rigged craft, carried one desperately long gun, and sailed uncommonly fast. My heart beat with joy when I fairly distinguished the latine sail of one of them, though I knew I should become a prisoner; but life is life—I might get out of a French prison, but never out of ‘Davy Jones’s Locker.’

I kept my eyes fixed upon the sail; it came right before the wind, and the way the boat was steering she would surely pass within hail.

“It was not a moonlight night, but a bright, clear, starlight. Presently I could distinguish the hull. She carried one huge latine sail and a small jib, and was running dead before the wind, which was light. I judged she would pass within a hundred yards of me; even at that distance she might not see me; so, when I considered her near enough to make myself heard, I hailed at the top of my voice, but received no reply for several minutes. At last I observed the gun-boat round up in the wind, and several voices in French hailed. I shouted out again, and after a time they made me out. In a few minutes she was close alongside my craft, and, throwing me a rope, amidst a volley of words, not one of which I understood, I scrambled on board, but so stiff in my lower timbers, that I fell down on the deck, thanking God heartily for my unlooked-for

preservation. I could make out that they knew I was an Englishman, for they said frequently, 'Anglais;' and presently one of the crew came up, holding a lantern, and said to me in tolerable English—

“ ‘You Englishman? where come from? what ship?’

“The jolly little ‘Spitfire,’ my hearties,’ says I; ‘and blessings on you for saving my life.’

“ ‘Oh!’ said the interpreter, ‘he is from the Got dam brig. What you do on the hencecoop?’

“I contrived to get upon my legs by this time; so I answered that I fell overboard in the squall, and that my messmates threw me the hencecoop to keep me up,

“ ‘Got dam,’ said the man, “what for they no pick you up?—very bad.’

“ ‘Bad enough, my friend,’ said I; ‘I suppose the brig carried away something in the squall.’

“ ‘ Well, never mind—you prisoner, but no harm—plenty eat and drink, and dry clothes—come along with me.’

“ Well, this was decent treatment enough ; so I followed my friend into the fore-cabin, and the Frenchman lent me a change while my own clothes were drying. I got a stiff glass of brandy and some food, and was then allowed to lie down to recover myself, till morning, when I was to be overhauled by the Captain to answer some questions.

“ In the morning I felt little the worse for my mishap. I heard a great commotion above, men running backwards and forwards, so I jumped up and made my way on deck—nobody seemed to mind me ; but on looking about me, I saw that all hands were busy in getting their long swivel gun ready for action. It was a fine, clear morning, and a nice breeze. On looking over the side, I saw, about three or four miles to leeward of us, our little brig, the ‘ Spittfire.’ She was under jury-masts, and was evidently

getting up jury, topmasts and yards. My friend of the previous night came up to me, and, pointing to the Spitfire, said—

“ ‘That your ship, eh?’

“ ‘Yes,’ said I, ‘that’s the craft; she was dismasted in the squall yesterday—that was the reason they could not pick me up.’

“ ‘You come to our Captain; he want to ask you questions,’ said the French sailor.

“ So I followed him aft, casting a look at the huge gun that worked on a pivot, which I knew would carry nearly twice as far as any of the guns in the brig, and I guessed also what they intended to do; for on looking aft, I perceived another gun-boat in the wake of the one I was in. The brig being crippled, and unable to set sail for a few hours, these boats would be terrible customers, with their long pivot-guns.

“ The Captain was a tall, thin man, about forty years of age, with a quick, intelligent eye. The sailor, who spoke English, and who

had passed some time in England, a prisoner, acted as interpreter.

“ ‘How many men on board your brig?’ asked the Captain.

“I saw no harm in not exactly telling an enemy the truth, so I said we were strong-handed—two hundred men, which was about sixty more than we had.

“ ‘*Diable !*’ said the Captain, ‘you are strong handed. What boats has the brig?’”

“A launch,” said I, “that can carry fifty men at a pinch, two long boats, a cutter, and two gigs.”

“ ‘*Diable peste !*’ again muttered the Captain.

“ ‘She sails well,’ he continued, ‘but under jury masts—her sailing is done—we shall try and take her however.’”

“ ‘You had better Captain,’ said I, very humbly, ‘let her alone, she is an ugly customer to play with.’”

“ ‘Ah,’ said the Frenchman, laughing, ‘we

shall keep clear of her guns with this fine breeze, at the same time let her feel the weight of our metal. There, you may go,' he added, 'I don't consider you as a prisoner of war, picked up as you were; you may stay on deck and see how we manage our pivot gun.'

" 'Well,' thought I, to myself, as I looked up at the monstrous latine sail and yard these French gun boats carry, 'if it would only fall stark calm, you'd have to manage something else, I'm blowed if you would'nt.' I knew if it fell a stark calm, the Spitfire's boat would soon be on board, but with the nice wind blowing, those boats sail like witches.

"The Frenchman had sixty men on board, and was about eighty tons. The other, astern, was smaller, but seemed full of men. The brig was soon within range of their long gun. The boat astern keeping away to open the ball on the brig's other quarter.

"I was in a state of mortal anxiety, for I could see that the crew of the Spitfire, about

one hundred and thirty in number, were working heart and soul to get up their jury-topmast, so as to get sail on the brig. I looked up at the sky, it was as bright as a polished mirror, but the sun was very hot; it might fall calm if the sea breeze did not set in, for the heat of the sun generally kills the night land wind.

“ I watched every movement—the pivot gun was pointed, and the concert commenced with a duet from the two gun boats. They were still a little out of range, for I could see the balls strike the water, short of the brig; the distance was then lessened, and the next shot from the other gun boat I could see told dismally upon the brig, knocking away the head of the fore-topmast and a lot of gear they were hoisting. I caught myself swearing and clenching my fist when I heard a cheer from the crew. Bang went the gun again, hulling the poor Spitfire, who could actually do nothing. Just as they were loading again, the huge

latine sail fell as flat as a board, then bellying out, with a strong puff, it was its last breath, I could see the breeze gradually darkening the water, and receding from us towards the land, while to seaward, it was a stark calm.

“‘*Sacre diable!*’ was shouted by fifty voices.

“‘The wind is done. Now for a change,’ I muttered, joyfully, to myself, ‘in the performance, my jolly boys.’

“All now became bustle and confusion on board the gun boats. The Captain sung out to rig the sweeps and get back into the wind, which was still to be seen darkening the water towards the land. Out went eight immense sweeps, and I was told I must help; well, I did so, for I could gain nothing by refusing, and the little I did would not save them.

“Like magic, four boats of the Spitfire were in the water, full of men. The French Captain danced and stamped about the deck like a madman, cursing something bitterly, old

Boreas, I guess, but old Blowhard was not to be frightened ; the more the Frenchman swore, the more calm grew Boreas. The gun boat moved about three miles an hour, under the sweeps, but the cutter and the two gigs came dashing through the water at the rate of eight knots.

“ The Captain now ordered the gunners to load the pivot gun to the muzzle, with grape and cannister, and my comrade at the oar, the man who could speak English, said his Captain was the devil, when roused, and that he would sink the first boat that came up.

“ ‘ Oh, of course,’ said I, ‘ but those in the other boats will cut his throat if he does.’

“ ‘ Well,’ said my friend, ‘ stick close to me, I like the English, and some of my comrades, if they think they will be taken, might stick their cutlass into your ribs.’

“ I thought that not at all improbable.

“ Seeing it quite useless to row, all hands got ready for a desperate resistance ; the

sweeps were got in, the gun depressed, and the gun boat brought into such a position that in boarding, the Spitfire's boats might receive the fire of the pivot gun in the most deadly manner.

“I recognized our lieutenant, an Irishman of the name of Terence Murphy, in the leading boat, standing up and cheering on his men; the boats now separated, the one with Lieutenant Murphy making right at the side of the gun boat, the other making a slight sweep to take her on her other quarter. I saw a man standing with a hatchet in his hand, close by the hoisting tackle of the latine yard; I guessed he was to cut it away, should the enemy get on board. I could scarcely breathe, for the gunner, with his match in hand, was waiting the order to fire.

“Just as the word to fire was leaving the Captain's mouth, I caught up a bucket of water standing near, and dashed it over the touchhole of the gun; as I did so, a sailor, with a furious

oath, levelled his pistol at my head, and several ran at me with their cutlasses, but, with a bound, I reached the side, and with a pistol ball lodged in my left shoulder, sprang overboard. As I did so a loud cheer rang through the air, Lieutenant Murphy and his jolly crew were on board. I should have had a knock on the head from one of my old comrades as I swam and laid hold of the gig's gunnel, had I not sung out. I was pulled in with a joyful shout, by my comrades, and in five minutes, was on board again, but all I wanted was to see my good-natured friend, the interpreter, for I could not have the heart to strike at the man who saved my life.

“In less than five minutes the gun boat was ours, without the loss of a man, and only a few slight wounds. I saved the Frenchman, luckily, for he was on the point of being cut down when I reached him.

“Lieutenant Murphy, after all was over, and learned how I had saved, most probably, all

their lives, by swamping the gun with a bucket of water, shook me by the hand, and swore he would get me rewarded, and so he did. The lieutenant took the other gun boat, but lost three men, and six badly hurt."

CHAPTER IX.

“HARK !” suddenly exclaimed Henry Bond.

The skipper paused—a voice from above sang out—

“There’s a precious squall a-coming, sir, it’s roaring aloft like thunder.”

“Ah, I thought as how we’d catch it,” said Mr. Seabright, jumping up, but first tossing down the remnant of the second glass. Seizing his tarpaulin hat, he rushed upon deck, followed by our hero. They had hardly time to reach it, when the gale struck the cutter, and she lay over to such a degree, having no way on her, that the skipper was on the point of crying out, let go the sheets and tacks, when the half buried craft rose from the trough

of the sea amid a shower of spray, and the next moment her active crew gained controul over her. The gale blew a perfect hurricane from the east, with a dense fog. The trysail was lowered, and double reefed, the foresail secured, and a storm gib set. It was now intensely dark and the storm howled through the rigging of the little yacht, with a wintry fierceness. The sea, already heavy, soon rose into crested waves, flooding the decks of the *Water Witch*, as she plunged amid the foaming waters.

“It’s as well to heave her too, William,” said Henry to the skipper, who stood holding on by the weather shrouds, “what do you think, eh?”

“Why, we must do so, Master Harry; I’m watching our mast, it bends now, under this lot of canvas like a whip. Ah! there goes the jib.”

As he spoke there was a sharp report, and the jib disappeared in the gloom. Harry and

two of the men ran forward; the foresail was double reefed. So making fast the sheets, it was soon run up, and the cutter hove too; the storm every moment increasing in fury. There were eight able seamen in the *Water-Witch*, besides the skipper and our hero; they were, therefore, strong handed, and the men active and young. The yacht was a remarkably fine sea boat, strongly built, and of great beam. For eight hours the gale blew a perfect tempest, and it required all the skill, energy, and courage of those on board to keep her above water, that terrible night, long remembered on the coast of Cornwall; for no less than thirteen vessels were totally wrecked between Plymouth and the Land's End, most of those on board them perishing. The yacht's bulwarks were shattered to pieces—her bowsprit carried away—her main boom torn from its fastenings, and her gig and small boat stove in pieces. To run was out of the question, as the tremendous sea would have overwhelmed them.

Providentially the trysail was of rather stout canvass, and proved their salvation; for had it split, or blown away, they must have perished. They, however, lost two foresails and two storm-jibs. The courage, energy, and daring of Henry Bond during the height of the gale, excited the admiration of the skipper and crew, even during that terrible and anxious time.

“Towards daylight, however, there appeared a lull, and just as the dull gray light of early morning stole over the storm tossed deep, the loud boom of cannon was heard, and almost immediately another gun followed.

“‘Some large craft in distress,’ said Henry, giving himself a shake, to get rid of some of the superfluous water with which he was soaked, ‘and not very far from us either.’

“There goes another gun,” said the skipper; “that’s out of a big ship, either a man-of-war or some homeward-bound Indiaman.”

The wind was still violent, but more from the southward and eastward, and the weather so thick that they could not see more than a couple of hundred yards from the yacht.

As the day wore on the storm decreased a little, and the crew were enabled to run out a temporary bowsprit, and reef ropes around the broken bulwarks. At midday it began to clear—the ‘Water Witch’ could now lie her course, though the sea was almost too powerful for her to contend against.

Just as they had run some few miles, and shook a reef out of the trysail, Henry, who was looking astern, perceived a huge dark object loom through the haze and mist of the breaking seas.

“Mr. Seabright, look aft,” exclaimed Henry; “I can make out a huge ship under her foresail, her main and mizen-masts gone.”

All on board now saw her plain enough; she lay over very much on one side, with her

bows buried in the water ; she had her foresail flying, but the sheets and tacks gone.

“Let us bear away for her,” said Henry ; “she looks to me, through the glass, to be sinking, and there’s a crowd of men astern, and some females also.”

“That’s a large Indiaman, Master Henry,” said the skipper, after a survey through the glass, at the disabled ship.

It required some little skill to get the yacht before the wind, the sea was so high and breaking with such tremendous violence ; but they at length succeeded, and ran down towards the East Indiaman. As they approached, rising on the crest of a huge billow, the little yacht looked like a cork as she dashed forward amid a cloud of spray, and passed close to the disabled ship. A loud cheer from those crowded in the stern of the ship greeted and encouraged their daring intention of assisting them, and a loud voice,

through a speaking-trumpet, hailed them as they shot past, saying—

“ ‘ We are sinking fast—our bows are stove in.’

All was consternation on board the ‘Water-witch’ on hearing these words, and Henry Bond became greatly excited on beholding several females amongst the group on the stern all secured, for the sea made a clear breach right over the illfated ship, which lay in the trough of the sea, totally at its mercy, her huge foresail being unconstrained, flapping like thunder in the gale.

“ Henry and the skipper consulted on the best means to be employed to get the people out of the sinking vessel. Neither had boats, and even if they had they could not have lived in such a sea. Henry proposed passing close under the stern, and getting a rope on board, made fast to a cable, and then lowering their sails, get the females on board in a cradle, and slide

them along the cable, by keeping up their foresail, the yacht would keep her distance from the sinking ship.

“There does not appear to be a third or even a fourth of her hands aboard,” remarked the skipper, “she must have lost most of her crew when she lost her masts. We must be very cautious, master Harry ; I will take the helm if you take charge of the rope.”

The *Water Witch* was gradually nearing the ship on a wind, the best mode of approaching her. When close under her stern, they perceived two men with coils of rope in their hands ready to heave. The ropes were caught, and the trysail of the yacht lowered, while her foresail backed her astern ; the crew of the sinking ship understood at once the intentions of those on board the yacht, and a cable being made fast to the ropes, it was quickly hauled up over the stern of the *East Indiaman*, and the sailors busied themselves in rigging a cradle of ropes, but the ship rolled so fearfully and

heavily that Henry feared very moment she would go down. One of his men stood ready with an axe to cut away the cable, should such an event take place.

In a few minutes one of the females was launched over the stern, and lowered down to the yacht, and a rope made fast to the cradle to haul it back again.

Henry Bond was unceasing in his efforts to save the women from immersion, but it was impossible to avoid dragging them through the sea. Several of the crew of the ship came down the rope and assisted in the labour.

The cradle was returning with the last of the females, a girl of some eight or ten years old; by some error in the fastenings, or a tremendous roll of the ship, straining it too suddenly, the unfortunate child was pitched screaming into the boiling sea.

Before the startled crew could even cast a rope, Henry, who was working without his jacket or shoes, so as to retain his footing on

the slippery deck, seized a coil of small rope, passed a loop over his body and plunged in after the child. A bold and splendid swimmer, he reached the girl.

Five of the yacht's men seized the rope to haul him back when necessary. Just at the point of being hurled from the summit of a wave into the abyss beneath, the child was grasped by the gallant youth, who raising himself in the water, shouted "haul in;" and were speedily brought on deck, where the child was frantically clasped in the arms of one of the ladies who had been rescued, together with the whole of the crew, and some valuable papers and their property.

The *Water Witch* had scarcely got clear of the vessel ere it went down head foremost.

The whole of these proceedings did not occupy much more than an hour. Sail was now got upon the "*Water Witch*," and her head turned towards her destination, the gale still continuing, but gradually veering more and

more into the southward and westward. There were now two and fifty human beings on board the little craft of only fifty tons.

The captain of the East Indiaman, a fine hale old gentleman, shook Henry's hand warmly and gratefully, saying—

“How this little vessel lived through such a night as the last amazes me ; but for the goodness of God in keeping you up, during such a fearful storm, and so tremendous a sea, we must all have perished : I rejoice to say that all the women are saved.”

“You must have lost a great part of your crew, captain, during the storm,” said Henry.

“Yes,” returned Captain MacDowd, with a sigh, “thirty as fine fellows as ever manned a ship perished the night before last. It was not last night's gale that was the cause of our terrible disaster. During the great storm of Tuesday, the wind sou'west, we must have been carried by a very strong current we were not aware of some miles more to the nor'ard

than we thought. The weather was very thick—a dense fog for four days previously—still I considered we were steering a fair course for the Channel, when, about two o'clock in the morning, the ship struck and broached to, and then lay over on her larboard quarter, with an awful sea going clear over her. In a minute the whole crew were upon deck. I knew we must have struck on one of the reefs off the Scilly Islands. In less than twenty minutes we were nearly dismasted—our boats beat to atoms—and, as I said, thirty of my crew were washed overboard. It was an awful hour—a tremendous sea lifted us over the reef—and then she was got before the wind. Five of our passengers also perished—but none of the females—they remained below. We had still our foremast and foresail—and, for a few hours, we hoped she had escaped destruction—but we soon found she had stove in her bows, and that we could not hope to keep her afloat; however, we got a thrummed sail over the leak, and

worked the pumps, and might perhaps have reached Falmouth but for the tempest of last night, which reduced the ship to a hopeless extremity."

Everything was done that could possibly be done to relieve the passengers and crew received on board the "Water Witch." To supply the ladies with dry garments was out of the question, but life was saved, and that great boon made up for all other deficiencies—besides, as the wind blew they would make Falmouth or Plymouth before morning. Towards sun-set the heavy rain that fell brought the wind into the nor'-west, but the thick weather lasted till the following day. When it cleared off, a view of the coast was obtained, and they found they had made more way than they had calculated, for they had passed the Start Point; consequently, Henry continued his course and ran into Lyme Regis before night.

It is not necessary, for the future under-

standing of our story, that we take note of more than two of the passengers of the lost East Indiaman "The Surinam." The young girl, who was saved by Henry Bond, and her protectress. The former was the only daughter of a Mr. Fleetwood, an enormously rich English merchant, many years settled at Calcutta, whose wife had died when their daughter Fanny was eight years old, and, on her death-bed, had implored her distracted husband to send the child to England to be educated. In compliance with his wife's dying wishes, Mr. Fleetwood engaged a Madame D'Arblay, a French lady, of good family, highly accomplished, and of a most amiable temper and disposition, to undertake the entire charge of his daughter.

Madame D'Arblay was the wife of a French *refugé*, who, some time previous to the death of Mrs. Fleetwood, had gone to France to take part in a projected revolution, and had left his wife in Calcutta, with the promise of sending

for him as soon as he had been re-instated in his estates, which had been confiscated. No intelligence of him had ever reached his wife, and, consequently, she was glad to avail herself of Mr. Fleetwood's offer of going to England with his daughter.

Mr. Fleetwood determined, at length, to send Fanny and her protectress to England to reside with his brother, one of the wealthiest merchants in London, a bachelor, of a most generous and liberal disposition.

Accordingly, Madame D'Arblay, who despaired of ever hearing more of her husband, and fearing he had fallen a victim to his rashness, and love of revolutionary principles, embarked, with her little charge, in the "Surinam," a noble ship of a thousand tons burden, for England, which they would never have reached but for the gallantry and courage of Henry Bond and the yacht's crew.

On reaching Lyme Regis, Madame D'Arblay

was taken ill, and unable to continue her journey to London.

Mr. Parks, on hearing the name of Fleetwood, hurried down to the inn where Madame D'Arblay was located, and had an interview with her.

Miss Fleetwood's uncle, Mr. George Fleetwood, of London, was one of Mr. Parks's oldest friends and schoolfellows; for years he had managed all his law affairs, and was still transacting business for him. He persuaded Madame D'Arblay and her charge to take up their abode with him at Bellevue, and at the same time promised to write to Mr. George Fleetwood, explain their situation, and propose to him that they should spend the winter with his niece instead of going to London.

The young girl was in raptures—she would be near her young preserver, for whom she already experienced the most intense interest and affection, and Henry himself felt the love

of a brother for the beautiful child he had saved from a watery grave.

Mr. Fleetwood immediately wrote a very kind letter of thanks to Henry, and another to his old friend Parks. He was, unfortunately, at that time, confined to his room by the gout, but fully acquiesced in his friend's wishes. He also wrote to Madame D'Arbly, enclosing her a check for two hundred pounds, telling her to want for nothing, and that the moment his rascally enemy quitted his extremities he would come to see her and his little niece.

A month afterwards, a magnificent piece of plate arrived at Grange House from the princely merchant for young Henry Bond, with two hundred pounds for the crew of the "Water Witch," and one hundred pounds for the skipper.

During the six months Fanny Fleetwood remained at Mr. Parks's, Little Fan, as she was usually called, was daily and almost hourly at

the Grange; her affection for Henry became the great leading object of her young life. She was a most amiable child, and, under the tuition of the accomplished and charming Madame D'Arblay, she bid fair to be very clever.

* * * * *

It was a sad day to Fan, and one of sincere regret to Henry, when Madame D'Arblay and her charge left the hospitable roof of Mr. Parks for her uncle's mansion in London, she thought her little heart would break—and nothing but the solemn promise of Madame D'Arblay, that she would prevail on her uncle to let her spend the next autumn at Grange House, as Mr. Bond kindly invited them to do, could console her on leaving.

A strange feeling was that in the heart of the young girl for her preserver. When near him, she watched his every look; if he painted

she was by his side eagerly trying to interpret even his thoughts; if he rode out to hunt, she listened for every sound, to catch the well-known step of his horse's feet; or if he sailed in the yacht, her eyes never left the bay till he returned. Every one could see the devotion of this young child, scarcely thirteen years old, for the noble-looking and handsome boy, that played and romped with her like a child himself. It was an affection grafted into her heart that neither time or absence would ever weaken.

* * * * *

The following autumn, Madame D'Arblay and her interesting charge passed three months at the Grange and three months at Mr. Parks'. No intelligence could be obtained of Monsieur D'Arblay, though Madame wrote several letters to persons she formerly knew in Paris; but the revolution was advancing with

gigantic strides ; the government of Louis the Sixteenth was overturned, his life threatened, and France, convulsed to her centre, awaited the issue in trembling anxiety.

* * * * *

Mr. Parks, after various consultations with the most eminent lawyers, was forced to abandon all attempts to reinstate the heir of Tregannon in his birth-right. One of Henry's sisters, the eldest, had married and gone into Germany—the youngest, Mary, said to be a most amiable and beautiful girl, corresponded with Mrs. Bond, and seemed most anxious and desirous of believing that her little brother Claude still lived ; but Lady Trecastle, though otherwise a most amiable and kind-hearted woman, would not listen to any reasoning on the subject, styling the affair a most artful imposition on the Bonds, being fully persuaded her brother perished in the manner stated.

Mr. Bond was furious.

“Ah!” said he, “the old story—if James Tregannon dies without heirs the property would go to their children. This prospect blinds them, and deadens all the natural good feelings in their hearts. Let it be, I shall still, thank God, be able to leave our dear boy a handsome independence. Confound my miserly cousin, I wish he would die before me, the estate would then be mine to will. I must set about making my will the moment Parks returns from London. Harry will stay two years at Oxford—after that, we shall see how to act.”

CHAPTER XIII.

HENRY BOND was approaching his twentieth year, and within a few months of quitting Oxford for Grange House. Once only, during the last two years, had he seen Fanny Fleetwood, who having had the advantage of the best masters in London, excelled in most accomplishments. She was paying her last visit to Mr. Parks's, for Madame D'Arblay thought it more than probable that they would return to India the following year. Fanny was almost too young to know exactly what love was, but

she felt that the happiness of her life would be for ever clouded the day she sailed for India.

About this time the fever, that the two previous years had visited the coast, began to spread with fatal violence. It was thought very little of at first, but like all those terrible scourges that periodically visit the earth and sweep off thousands of the human race, it felt its way slowly but surely, gradually gaining strength with each new victory, till in its might and power it made mankind tremble.

In the summer of 179— it spread to a most alarming extent at Weymouth, Charmouth, and Lyme Regis.

One morning, at an early hour, Henry was roused from his slumbers by his attendant entering his room—

“Oh, sir!” exclaimed the man, “I have shocking intelligence to impart,” at the same time handing a letter to our hero in his uncle’s hand-writing, “that was brought, sir, by a

special messenger. The man says, poor Mr. Parks is dead !”

“Good God !” exclaimed Henry springing from his bed and in great grief tearing open his uncle’s letter. It was written in great agitation, and contained but few lines :

“ MY DEAR BOY,

“ Your poor aunt is attacked by the fever. God help us ! kind hearted Parks is dead, after only five hours’ suffering. I wish to see you—and yet, it is better you should stay away. I am quite distracted and miserable, may God spare my beloved Ellen to me.

“ Your loving uncle,

“ HENRY BOND.”

“ William !” exclaimed Henry, “ order a

chaise and four horses instantly. I shall be ready before they are here, lose not a moment. My God, my poor aunt, ah I feel I shall never see her more alive, and my kind warm hearted friend Parks dead !”

Pale and agitated, Henry could scarcely finish his dressing, or write a hasty note to his tutor, to explain the reason of his sudden departure.

In less than an hour he was rolling over the road to Exeter through Bath as fast as four horses and postillions doubly paid could urge them ; his thoughts during his long journey were terrible. Without pausing on the road, excepting merely to change horses, he reached the lodge gate of Grange House. One glance at the sobbing Mrs. Horn, the gate-keeper's wife, smote upon his heart, and before she told the sad tale, he had suspected the truth. His aunt, his kind, loving, noble hearted aunt, she who had saved him from a life of misery, perhaps, of shame, was dead, and his beloved

uncle attacked! This was appalling intelligence. He felt a chill like that of death creeping over him, as he leaped from the chaise which he prevented proceeding up the avenue; he walked rapidly up to the mansion. The servants that received him were in tears; there were five besides his uncle in the house prostrated by the fever. In the hall he encountered Mr. Howard the venerable vicar of the parish.

“Oh, my dear boy!” exclaimed the old man grasping his hand, “this is a great trial for you to bear, God in His mercy give you strength and resignation to bend to His decrees. You had better not, however, incur unnecessary risk, you cannot be of service as there are two eminent physicians from Exeter in the chamber with your uncle.”

“Alas! my dear sir, by his bed-side is my place were I, to incur a hundred deaths; may God in His mercy restore him!” and with the tears streaming from his eyes, he rushed up

the stairs, and the next instant was kneeling by the bed-side, and bathing the hand of his kind benefactor with passionate tears of love and deep sorrow.

For three days and nights the strong constitution of Mr. Bond struggled with the destroyer, and during that time Henry scarcely left the room.

Though his uncle did not speak, except when raving, it was quite evident to Henry that he saw and recognised him; he felt his burning hand press his, and his eyes once or twice resting on his with such a look of fond affection, that Henry's heart beat with agony. Alas! he hoped against hope, for the physicians declared there was no chance of life.

The last night of this painful struggle, it chanced that Henry, towards twelve o'clock, happened to be alone in the chamber with his uncle; one of the doctor's felt ill, the other was seeking an hour's repose, the night nurse was below for some preparation she was mak-

ing. For the four previous hours Mr. Bond lay upon his back apparently fast asleep, the eyes quite closed, the lips a little apart breathing gently as an infant, and strange to say, there was a slight tinge of colour in the sunken cheek ; his right hand and arm lay stretched out on the quilt, there was a profound stillness in the chamber, and the shaded light of the lamp fell dimly on the face of the sleeper, on which Henry was gazing earnestly, and oh, how painfully.

Suddenly the hand that lay on the bed was raised, and Henry distinctly caught the low murmur of his uncle's voice—

“ Henry, my boy, my beloved boy, hearken to my last words, I cannot see you, but I feel you are near me.” These words were only audible by Henry's placing his ear near to the lips of the dying man, he hardly breathed as those low anxious sounds were uttered in his ear. “ Your father, my poor boy, was murdered by that villain, James Tregannon. Yes,” he mur-

mured in the ear of the scarcely breathing youth, "he killed him. I see it all now in this my last hour. My will—I die without signing my will!"

The lips closed, but the hand was raised and pointed towards heaven—the next instant it fell heavily on the bed, and as Henry pressed a passionate kiss upon his benefactor's lips, his spirit fled, and the youth became insensible.

THE YOUNG COMMANDER.

CHAPTER XIV.

OUR hero continued in an insensible state for several weeks; it was not, however, the prevailing epidemic that had attacked him.

The shock he had so suddenly received, his intense grief at the loss of his aunt, his uncle's strange words at the moment the hand of death was upon him—his having partaken of no sustenance from the period of leaving Oxford, and for many hours after his arrival at Grange House, all together acting on his strong frame, prostrated both mind and body.

When he first unclosed his eyes with returning consciousness, he gazed bewildered on the objects around him. Gradually his memory returned, and, with a heavy sigh, he remembered that he was now alone in the world— aunt, uncle, and even the good-hearted and warm friend, Lawyer Parks, all were gone. Tears, those outpourings of the heart, came to his relief, and after a time he again looked around him. A profound stillness reigned in the chamber, broken only by the low murmuring voice of an elderly woman, who, seated near the window with a small table before her, was reading the Bible. A glance convinced him that he was no longer in Grange House, for every chamber in it was familiar to him.

He was evidently in a cottage chamber, the roof low, the two windows small and glazed with diamond-shaped panes inserted in lead. Everything around and about him was scrupulously clean and snowy white; the windows were open, and a cool, delicious breeze, gentle

as a zephyr, lifted the light gauze blinds that softened the bright beams of a June sun. He looked at the old dame, and thought her features were familiar to him, but he could not quite recollect where he had seen them; he wondered much where he was, and again he shut his eyes, for the old nurse rose, closed her Bible, and left the room. A minute or two after he heard the door again open, and, again unclosing his eyes, he fixed them on the person who was entering, for there were no curtains to the bed. Henry felt his heart throb almost violently as his gaze rested on the figure of a young girl in deep mourning. As she closed the door she raised her eyes, and they met those of Henry. With a wild cry of rapturous joy she looked up to heaven, and then rushing to the side of the bed, fell upon her knees, exclaiming—

“Oh! Henry, Henry! blessed be God, He has restored you to my prayers!” and bending that beautiful head, she covered the hand trem-

blingly held out towards her with a torrent of tears.

“Fanny, beloved Fanny, is it indeed you?” murmured Henry, in a voice choking with emotion. “I am not then alone in the world.”

“Alone, Henry!” exclaimed the young girl, in a voice of touching affection, and almost reproach, “Oh, no, not while Fanny—your own Fanny, for her life is yours—not while life is spared to her.”

Thus, in that moment of returning recollection did those two young hearts, loving from early years, become united and bound together by a tie that neither time, or suffering, or separation, had ever the power to sunder.

Madame D’Arblay hearing the sound of voices from the adjoining room, hastened to learn the cause, accompanied by Hannah. All were rejoiced to see the improvement in their charge, but Madame D’Arblay insisted on their withdrawing, for she feared the over exertion and excitement might bring on a relapse.

Fanny Fleetwood, with joy in her young heart, and a look of fond affection at Henry, and promising to return, for a few minutes, in the evening, retired, leaving him to repose, for so extremely weak had the long continuance of the fever left him, that even the few words he had spoken nearly overpowered him. A draught from the hand of Hannah, and a refreshing sleep, restored him greatly before night.

The following evening, Hannah sat by his bed-side, previously to the visit from Fanny, who, with Madame D'Arblay resided in a cottage close by. He begged the faithful young woman to explain all the past to him, promising to remain silent and listen, and above all, to tell him how long he had been ill.

“Nine weeks,” said Hannah, “nine long weeks; five of them that dear angel of a girl spent in this chamber, watching every change in your wasted features, always hoping, always saying, God would spare you, and He has—for

you have had a terrible struggle with death. I was nearly worn out when that dear girl and kind madame arrived from London. Oh, the agony that beautiful girl suffered when she first saw you."

"But how came I here?" asked Henry, the tears streaming from his eyes as he thought of the devotion of Fanny, braving the terrible malady that had carried off so many, to nurse and watch over him.

Hannah sighed, for she could not but weep over the recollection of the once happy home they had all enjoyed under the roof of Grange House.

"You ask me where you are, Mister Henry. Alas! we are no longer under our old roof, but you are not far from it, you are in the cottage on Charmouth Cliff, belonging to good Mrs. Sims, mother, you know, to Mrs. Horn, the gatekeeper's wife of Grange house."

"Ah, yes, I remember her well," said

Henry, "now I suppose Mr. Robert Curtis Bond is the possessor of Grange House."

"The wretch! The miserable, miserly wretch," exclaimed Hannah, in a tone of excitement. "Yes; three days after our poor master and mistress's death, this vile, heartless man arrived. Imagine to yourself a man thin as a lath, full six feet high, with a face like a hatchet, his garments threadbare, and so tight on his miserable legs, that he looked like a scarecrow upon stilts, and yet he had a dark, savage scowl upon his features, with his great bushy overgrown eyebrows. Oh, how I wished, God forgive me, that he might catch the fever; but law bless me, even the fever would not prey upon such a starved carcass as his. When the first dinner he eat in the house, was served up to him, he groaned and ground his teeth like a maniac, crying out, "Oh, Lord, oh, Lord, look at this shameful waste and extravagance." The next thing he

did, even before the remains of your aunt and uncle were carried to their last resting place, was to order your removal from beneath his roof. There, don't flush in the cheek and put your poor wasted frame into a nervous fit," pleaded Hannah, soothingly, "you would not think the words or conduct of such a brute worth attending to. I would have strangled him myself, the miser, only he was too contemptible to care about. Doctor Grant—the other poor doctor, and a good soul he was, died of the fever, in four days, and poor William was near going, but got over it at last.—Well, Doctor Grant said it would be your death to move you. The wretch replied what was that to him, out of his house you should go. Poor Miss Parks was dangerously ill, or I would have moved you there. None of the servants in the house would obey him, and they were all discharged after the funeral. He was going to send to Lyme for common porters to

move you, when I determined to do it myself, and I came to Dame Sims, and the good soul gave up her cottage directly. Six of the servants carried you here on a litter, you did not seem to suffer much by the removal. The whole country cried shame on the wretch, and while he stayed he was afraid to stir out, for the sailors of the yacht vowed if they could catch hold of him, they would half drown him. After the funeral, Mr. Saunders, poor Mr. Parks's law friend arrived. Your poor uncle's will was all regularly drawn up, and all ready to be signed the very day poor dear Mr. Parks was seized by the fever. In it you were acknowledged as his nephew, by marriage, that you were the lawful heir of Tregannon, and, except the Grange Estate, he left you everything but what went in legacies to his servants. Mr. Saunders remonstrated with this Curtis Bond, and said, in honour, he was bound to follow up the wishes of his deceased

relatives, with respect to the legacies bequeathed to faithful old servants. The miserly wretch got into a towering passion, and swore not one shilling would he pay any body, save what the law compelled him."

Mr. Saunders was disgusted, and sternly told him that what was your private property, such as were well known to be gifts of Mr. Bond to you, he would claim, and would insist on their being restored to you.

"I will not tell you what the wretch said, for it would only fret you. Mr. Saunders gained his point—all your private effects were, therefore, removed, and the splendid plate sent you both by Mr. Fleetwood and the firm of Johnson, Drake, and Co., the owners of the East Indiaman the 'Surinam,' and your two horses, books, etc., etc., were removed to Miss Parks' mansion, who still continued dangerously ill.

"Your aunt's property went to the next of kin on her own side; your sisters, therefore,

will get that, though you, of course, poor dear soul, are her next heir, if your identity could be proved. She never anticipated the fearful blow that came upon her so awfully; she was still, you may say, in the vigour of life, not fifty, and they were both planning how to invest the whole for your benefit, when the awful fever took them.

“Some three years back, your lamented aunt purchased an annuity of sixty pounds a year for me; alas! that such a kind heart should be called out of this world, and the bad ones left; but it’s God’s will, Mr. Henry, and He knows best what is good for us.

“After the funeral, the servants, as I said, were all dismissed, the house shut up, and left under the care of a miserable couple, husband and wife. The yacht was purchased by somebody in London; I did not hear the name. The old skipper and the crew were to take her there this week, I understand.”

“Now tell me of Miss Fleetwood,” said

Henry, with a heavy sigh, "how did she hear of my illness?"

"Oh!" said Hannah, with a smile that betrayed something more than the mere words she said, "oh, I wrote to the dear girl to tell her, for poor Miss Parks could not, and she and madame came here at once, and took lodgings in a cottage near us. Ah, Mister Henry, I was very careful myself of you, but Miss Fanny was your guardian angel; and though you did not know her or anybody, you were like a child when she spoke to you, and what you would not take from any other person you took from her eagerly. It was like as if God was pleased to see the pure true love and devotion in the heart of the beautiful girl, who neither cared for sleep or rest, so that she could ease the pain you suffered, and thus caused you to feel that an angel was tending your sick bed. Ah! Mr. Henry, the Almighty never formed a more beautiful creature than Miss Fanny, and her soul is purity itself."

Henry sighed heavily.

“Why do you sigh, my poor boy?” said Hannah, thinking of old times. “Is she not bound heart and soul to you? You are her life, and never, never, believe me, will she ever know happiness away from you. And you love her well, Mr. Henry, that I know, and she knows it too; for hours you have raved about her. She heard, too, your strange ravings, all about your father, whom you said was murdered by James Tregannon, and that that villain had robbed you of your rights. Miss Fanny was astounded, for you are aware she did not know your early history; so I told her all, and that all was true what you said, except, indeed, that your poor father was murdered by James Tregannon, that was the raving of fever; I told her how your father took poison by mistake in a fit of grief on losing you; thus, you see, the dear young lady knows everything. Until she got my letter she had no intelligence

of your illness, and when she did hear of it, nothing would do but to come down here, and attend on you; indeed madame herself was most anxious, and Mr. Fleetwood offered no objection; so you see, Mr. Henry, you have many kind hearts to think of you and to love you."

"Your's is a kind, good, heart, Hannah," said our hero, with much emotion; "I should be a very ungrateful being if I felt not the deepest gratitude for the devotion and tenderness you have displayed."

"Never mind that, Master Henry, get well, that's the first thing; after that, we will soon set things to rights. Now, try and get a little sleep—for Miss Fanny and madame will be here in a couple of hours; in the meantime you shall have a nice cup of tea—all you want now is to get strength."

So saying, the affectionate and devoted Hannah rose up, settled some things in the

room, and retired, insisting on her charge trying to sleep. He certainly closed his eyes to please her, but the vision of Fanny Fleetwood drove away all repose.

CHAPTER XIV.

It was now the month of July, and Madame D'Arblay and her charge had returned to London. Our hero was sufficiently recovered to take exercise in the open air, and was rapidly regaining his former strength and vigour; but his spirits had received a shock which nothing but time could restore. We leave the parting of these two young people to the imagination of our readers, but we recal a conversation a few days prior to their leave-taking.

Could the future look dark and gloomy at their age, when all appeared sunshine? No dark clouds were allowed to throw a shadow over the path before them. Henry sat, when able to leave his room, on the rustic seat before the cottage door—Fanny by his side—the scene before and around them was bright and beautiful enough had they thought of looking at it—but Henry looked only into the deep blue loving eyes of the sweet girl beside him, and Fanny saw nothing but her lover. They talked over the past, but they allowed their thoughts to rest only on the present, leaving the future to Providence, and, in some respects, it was wise to do so, for many poison the present by anticipating evils in the future, that never occur except in the foreboding mind of the dreamer.

Fanny listened to Henry's account of the past—his early years—the cruel usage he had received, and the fond affection of his lost re-

latives, the Bonds, his utterly helpless position, without a name, without fortune or station.

“How then,” he cried, “can I expect to win this dear hand?”

And he pressed the one he held fondly to his lips.

“Quite easily, my own Harry,” returned the girl, with her bright, sunny smile. “In the first place, the said hand you have already got possession of, and my poor heart with it. We are both too young to be forging difficulties for ourselves. You have promised faithfully to come to London in September, to see uncle George, who already loves you, though he has never seen you, for you were absent when he came to the Grange; and you have promised not to think of that scheme of yours of volunteering into the navy, because the Duke of Clarence and many of the nobles and gentry of England have done so, till you have seen him. Then you say you have no name. Take your own, dear Harry,” added the fair

girl, with a kindling of her deep blue eyes, that showed, young as she was, there was spirit and energy in that gentle heart, if circumstances required its display. "Take your own name of Claude Tregannon; and let any man dare say you have no right or title to it."

"My own glorious Fanny," said Henry, his pale cheek tinging with a colour long absent from it, "I will do so; for I ought to assert my right to my name; let the villain who seeks to deprive me of it, prove I have no claim to it."

"Well then, we will leave all the rest till we meet in September. Hannah, when you are well enough to go on your search for the cave in Cornwall, will come up to London to live with me. Madame is particularly partial to her."

"And most truly she deserves it; she has been unceasing in her affection, and, but for her steady attachment, I might never have lived to be blessed with your presence."

Thus communed those young hearts, and thus they parted—loving and hoping, and trusting, with pure faith, in the future.

After the departure of Madame D'Arblay and her charge, Claude Tregannon, as he henceforth determined to call himself, let who would dispute his title to the name, set about ascertaining in what kind of position he really stood.

Miss Parks had returned to her father in London, who was busy arranging his brother's affairs, for, strange to say, he also died without a will; but as his brother was next heir, there was no difficulty in the arrangement. Some five years previously, he had made his niece Margaret a present of five thousand pounds, which he laid out advantageously for her. To Henry she was a sincere friend; and, previously to leaving Bellevue, assured him of her desire of assisting him by every means in her power. It was grateful to Henry's feeling heart to find he possessed such firm and true

friends. Every day, for an hour, he was accustomed to wander to the picturesque and beautiful church, where rested his beloved aunt and uncle, whose love and attention he could never forget. The fever still continued to carry off its victims ; amongst the last was the venerable Mr. Howard.

Claude being completely restored to health, prepared for his departure into Cornwall, feeling an ardent desire to behold Tregannon House, and have a search for the cave, where James Tregannon was supposed to have been concealed, previous to and after his abduction from Tregannon. The words of his uncle—that his father had been murdered by James Tregannon—made a deep impression on his mind. At first he considered they were the result of disordered intellect brought on by the fever, as he could not see how it was possible that such should be the case, after all the evidence and proof brought forward that the late Baronet unintentionally poisoned himself. Still those words

coming from his uncle, when the last breath of life was escaping from his lips, so solemnly, so emphatically pronounced, looked as if the dying man was inspired with a divine light, and uttered the words in the firm belief that he revealed the truth. The more he pondered over them, the more he became convinced that such, after all, might be the fact. He began calmly to argue the case with himself. James Tregannon, no doubt, was well acquainted with every inch of the mansion; was it not possible he might have entered by some secret way, and getting, in the dead hour of the night, into his father's room, have forced the poison down his throat. The fearful shriek heard by several, and by his own man, was a strange circumstance in itself; he, therefore, resolved to minutely examine Tregannon House and grounds, if he could gain permission to do so, and also to search for the cave. On looking over his effects and means, he found he was just master of about seven hundred and fifty

pounds, after selling his horses and some sporting articles he had no longer use for. The splendid plate presented to him by Mr. Fleetwood and the owners of the "Surinam," he had packed up and forwarded to London to the care of the kind-hearted Mr. Saunders. It was a great consolation to his generous heart to know that notwithstanding his altered position in the world, the friends of Mr. Bond all evinced the greatest kindness towards him. Several sent most friendly letters—for while the fever raged along the coast, most of the country families had deserted the vicinity, offering services, and inviting him on his convalescence to come and spend some time with them.

He also received a letter from a very dear friend and companion of his at Oxford, the Honourable Frederic Delaware, whom he had saved from drowning, and who was well acquainted with all his previous history.

Frederic Delaware was destined for the

Church, his father having some interest in that quarter; his elder brother was in the Guards. Frederic, however, was not at all inclined for Church preferment, and wrote to Claude, and after stating his deep regret on hearing of his bereavement, and altered position in the world, invited him to join him in volunteering into the navy, that the Duke of Clarence and many of the young nobility and gentry had, on the declaration of war against France, volunteered to serve, and that he had obtained leave from his father to do so, and trusted that Claude, with his love for the sea, and his perfect knowledge of navigation, would join him.*

* At this period many young men of distinguished families, following the example of the Duke of Clarence, began to flock into the navy. One ship was remarkable for the number on board. The youngsters were accustomed to reef and furl the mizen topsail. They were aloft one day furling the sail, when the Captain of the

This proposal Claude would most willingly have agreed to but for his promise to Fanny.

* * * * *

Having, with great difficulty, prevailed upon good Mrs. Sims to accept remuneration for the use of her cottage, and her kind attention to him during his long illness, he set out for Cornwall, having first seen Hannah leave for London. He reached Truro on the third day, and having only a very small portmanteau, and wishing to avoid all public places, he set out, on foot, from Truro, to a little hamlet, now called King Harry, and situated on a bend of the River Fal, called King Harry's

ship sung out, "My lords and gentlemen, and you right honourable lubbers on the mizen top-sail yard, furl that sail, and come down out of that."—Life of Earl St. Vincent.

Reach. This village was within a mile or so of Tregannon Park. There he found a neat country inn, with a ferry to the opposite side of the river, there being no bridge over the Fal, till it reaches the town of Truro. The landlady was a widow, advanced in years, and a highly respectable old dame she seemed. Besides keeping the little inn, her two sons farmed a considerable extent of land belonging to the estate of Tregannon.

It was evening when Claude arrived with his little portmanteau in his hand, his face flushed with exercise, his strength and health quite restored, and though attired in an extremely plain suit of mourning, his noble figure, and the same singular beauty of feature his father was so remarkable for, attracted, immediately, any one he addressed. The dame was seated under the rustic porch of the inn, covered with the blossoms of various parasite plants ; she was busy knitting, with her spectacles on her nose, at the same time read-

ing a large old family bible, and, at times, watching the ferry boat that was coming over from the opposite side, with some cattle. The river ran calm and tranquil before the cottage door, and a deep laden sloop was working slowly up with the tide ; it was a calm, peaceful scene to look upon, in a fine, clear, warm evening in July, with the last rays of the setting sun catching here and there an open glen to play upon the water, while the deep shadows of the noble trees on the high banks stretched right across the stream.

Our hero approached the porch, and the old dame taking off her spectacles, looked into his face as he addressed her in his musical voice, saying—

“ Pray, my good dame, can you give me accommodation for a week or so. I am an amateur artist, and I have heard a great deal of the beauty of this district.”

As the old dame listened to his voice, and gazed anxiously and earnestly into his face,

the tears came into her eyes, some strange flash of memory darting through her brain ; wiping them away with the corner of her apron, she got up, and dropping a curtsey, said—

“ Surely, sir, surely we can accommodate you. Lord bless me !” she added, with a sigh, looking earnestly into his face, “ what strange fancies do come into old people’s heads ; please to excuse me, sir, but indeed, indeed, you do so put me in mind of times past, that I cannot but believe I am dreaming. Jessie, girl, come here.” She called out through the open window.

“ Why, my good dame,” said Claude, with an eager and natural curiosity, as she was putting aside her knitting and bible, “ why do I put you in mind of past times ?”

“ Lord bless me, that voice of yours, sir, makes my heart thrill. I’m a queer old body, sir, and live much in the past, as most old people do. Beg your pardon, sir,” turning to a very pretty rosy girl, who just then came out

from the house. "Get the little bed-room and front-room ready, Jessie, for this young gentleman, he is going to stay with us for a week, he says, and take his portmanteau up stairs."

Jessie ventured a look at the tall and handsome youth before her, and then took his portmanteau.

"Will you please to sit down in this porch, sir, 'tis a very pleasant evening, and the heat of the day is now passed; your room will be ready very soon—would you like to have tea, or perhaps you have not dined."

"I shall be quite content with a cup of tea," said our hero, sitting down and gazing upon the river.

He did not like to question the dame further at that moment, but he felt satisfied that she must have known his father and all his family, having been many years resident on the estate; for he understood that the Tregannon property extended a considerable distance up and down

the river. He sat for half an hour under the porch, musing deeply, and attracted at times by the boats and smacks coming up with the tide.

“Now, sir,” said Dame Treestrail, “your rooms are ready, and your tea also.”

The sun had set, and a deep shadow spread over the scene, as Claude rose and followed his landlady up stairs into a small, but very neat sitting-room, the windows of which faced the river. Candles were lighted, and the tea and toast placed upon the table. Everything looked comfortable, and the old dame seemed pleased when he expressed himself to that effect.

“Ah! sir, I do not know how it is,” she said, “but I think I’m a dreaming when I shut my eyes and hear your voice, it’s so like—dear me, it’s so very like—”

“Pray take a chair, dame,” said Claude, “for you have made me very curious; besides I wish to ask you a few questions about Tregannon House.”

“Lord bless me, sir,” said the landlady, “did you say Tregannon?”

“Yes, Tregannon,” returned our hero; “living so near to it, no doubt you know all about the place.”

“Lord love ye, my good sir, I lived two-and-twenty years in Tregannon House. I know all about it,” she added, with a heavy sigh. “Yes, in truth I do, and a noble family they were. I am proud to say, sir,” continued the old dame, “that I was the nurse to the late Baronet, Sir Henry Claude Tregannon; and when I married my poor man, who has now been dead nigh seventeen years, my kind, generous master bestowed this house and fifteen acres of land on me and mine for ever, and also let us the little farm adjoining at a very low rent. But since Sir Henry’s unfortunate death, the agent of the present master made us pay three times the rent, or give up the farm; but the Lord’s name be praised, my sons were well to do, and sooner

than give up the farm after holding it so many years, we gave Mr. Stonehenge the sum he required. All the tenants' rents are raised, and many of them say that they will give up their farms when their leases are out."

"You said my voice reminded you of some one."

"Lord bless me, yes; it's as like as any two human voices can be—to say nothing of your wonderful resemblance—to—to the late Baronet's—oh dear, oh dear, if that poor, dear boy had lived that was drowned in this here river, he couldn't have grown up more like his father than you are, sir. I hope you will pardon my saying so. Ah! it was a woful day, that day—it's now—let me see—for I ought to remember it well—for my poor man was on his death-bed that very day; yes—seventeen years ago and a few months. If he were alive now, he would just be your age, to judge by your looks, sir."

"Who lives in Tregannon House now?"

demanded Claude, after a short pause. "Any of the family?"

"Lord bless ye, no sir. The family be all gone out of this country. Three fine girls they were, of different mothers, but all handsome girls. Miss Mary, the prettiest, is the only one unmarried. Then came the present Baronet—" The old lady shook her head. "He did not stay long. I remember him well; for although I was married and settled here years before he came to Tregannon, yet scarcely a day passed but I saw some of the family, or went up to the house to see my master. Ah! he was a sad boy, but a worse man. Laws me! how I am talking to a stranger; and yet I can't think, sir, but you must be, in some way or other, connected with the Tregannon family. Is that the case, sir?"

"Did you ever hear of Mrs. Bond, of Grange House, in Dorsetshire?" asked Henry.

"Lord be good to us! surely you do mean my poor master's sister, Mistress Ellen Tre-

gannon, as was, before she married Mr. Bond. Ah! she was a kind, loving soul, and dearly loved her brother; and yet, poor erring mortals that we are, Sir Henry did not love his sister as fondly as she loved him. Perhaps she tried too much to break him of some queer fancies he had, and you know, sir, young as you are, it's very hard to break oneself of things one feels accustomed to—and then we don't always love those best who wish us well; but, pardon me, sir, I never heard that Mrs. Bond had any children."

And Dame Treestrail looked very earnestly into the face of Claude, whose cheek flushed under her inquisitive gaze.

"My name is Bond," he at length said; "you, perhaps, heard of my aunt and uncle's death, from the terrible fever that raged some months ago on the Dorset coast."

"Dead! Mrs. Bond, Ellen Tregannon that was, dead!" exclaimed the old dame, in a tone of bitter grief, "and I live to hear it, I that

am past my eightieth year ! Alas ! alas ! what a world it is ; I have outlived all those I loved and honoured. And so you are a nephew of Mr. Bond ; well-a-day, why you should be so like to Sir Henry Tregannon is very wonderful.”

“ You have not told me who lives in Tregannon House.”

“ Nobody resides in the house, sir—that is, none of the family, since the attorney, Mr. Stonehenge, went off to America ; did you hear of that, sir ?”

“ Yes,” returned Claude, “ I heard he made away with fifty thousand pounds, raised upon the estate, and by James Tregannon insuring his life.”

“ Well, sir—I heard after that the lenders got possession of the estates, and then a London lawyer and two gentlemen came down here and formally took possession, and went round to all the tenants and settled the paying of the rents. My eldest son, who was a great favourite with my poor master, took the

gardens and the lawn of twenty-two acres, and the two small farms adjoining this, and undertook to keep the house, etc., in repair, and he and his family live in it. His eldest daughter was married some little time back to a young surgeon, who is doing very well in London, and, indeed, we are all well and prospering; but we never forget the loss of our dear master's son; it continually haunts my son Nicholas's mind that the body that was buried was not our master's child; but, good Lord, who's else could it be, in the dress of the poor boy?"

Claude listened in a musing mood for several minutes, and then said—

"Your son, I hope, will permit me to see the house and grounds; my uncle told me there were some fine family pictures in the great gallery, and that the pleasure gardens and grounds about the house were very beautiful,"

"Oh, dear me, sir—you will be very welcome to go there every day, if you please;

everything is just as it was—nothing touched. Ah, sir, you will see a full length portrait of my dear master, and Lord bless me, except that you be better and stronger made, you be his very image ; and then you will see a beautiful picture of his second wife, the mother of his beautiful boy, that God took to himself. Woe's me, he was too lovely a child to live !”

Our hero felt a strong wish to reveal himself, but was restrained, for many reasons ; therefore, after some further trifling observations, the hostess left him to himself.

She, however, sent for her son, formerly the head gardener of the late Baronet, a highly respectable man, well brought up, and possessing great taste in ornamenting and laying out grounds. He was at this time about forty-eight years of age, and had five children, three grown up daughters, the two youngest living with him in Tregannon House.

Later in the evening, Claude was sitting reading, when a tap at the door interrupted

him. On his saying come in, Dame Treestrail's son entered the room; no doubt the old landlady had been talking to him of the extraordinary likeness of her lodger to his late master; for he came in with a strange, anxious expression on his intelligent and expressive features, and as Claude Tregannon rose, and looked him full in the face, the light falling strongly on his features, the man staggered back, his cheek actually becoming pale from agitation and astonishment.

“Good God,” he exclaimed, “am I dreaming, sir? sir,” he added, leaning forward his face now flushed to crimson, “excuse me—you are not who you say you are—I cannot be deceived—you may take me for a madman—but were I brought before any court in great Britain, I would swear on the Holy Book that you are the lost son of my old master, Sir Henry Claude Tregannon. I always said the body found was not his—I could have taken my oath of it. Oh, sir,” he added, the tears flowing from his

eyes from excess of agitation and the memory of the past. Claude stood irresolute and surprised, so irresistible was the manner and appeal of Mr. Treestrail—"Good God, sir, speak to me—let me hear your voice—do not be afraid to speak, or answer me—I would lay down my life this moment for the son of my beloved master."

Our hero was affected by the sincere and earnest manner of Mr. Treestrail; and, holding out his hand, he said—

"You are deceived, Mr. Treestrail, perhaps, by a strange resemblance."

"No, no, no," interrupted the man, again turning pale; and grasping Claude's hand with eagerness he suddenly pushed up the loose sleeve of his coat, and, baring his arm nearly to the elbow, he gazed upon the muscular arm of the youth, and his eye rested upon an almost obliterated mark or cicatrice below the elbow; with a passionate exclamation, he threw his arms round the young man's neck,

embracing him with all the fondness and devotion of a parent. "Ah, my God, sir, why wish to hide or disguise yourself from John Treestrial, who loved your father better than himself? Where have you been, sir, these long years past? Why let a villain rob you of your birthright?"

Claude was completely overcome by the earnest and vehement affection exhibited by John Treestrial. The mark on his arm he had never paid any attention to—and yet John Treestrial had at once searched for this, and, having seen it, became satisfied, past any one's power to shake his belief, that he was Sir Henry Tregannon's son.

"I will not deny to you now, Mr. Treestrial," said our hero, making him sit down beside him, "that I consider myself to be the son of Sir Henry Tregannon."

"God bless you! you could not deceive me," said Mr. Treestrial, with a smile of de-

light, and pressing the young man's hand fervently.

“We will talk over this another time; I will explain everything to you to-morrow when I intend visiting you at Tregannon; but answer me one question—why did you seem so anxious to examine that slight mark on my arm?”

“Because, my dear young master, because I myself, unintentionally, inflicted the wound that left that mark—and I will tell you how, though my mind is in a state of such excitement and bewilderment that I can scarcely collect and put together the thousand strange ideas and images flitting through my brain. When you were about two years old, your lamented father came with you in his arms into the great conservatory; I was anxious to shew Sir Henry a magnificent cactus, just come into blossom, and, for a moment, he put you down, while he ascended a few steps to look

at the flower. Short as was the time, you contrived to thrust your little arm through a pane of glass—the glass inflicted a severe cut upon the arm just below the elbow. Though the wound healed, it left a distinct mark like a small cord round the arm. I considered myself the cause of the accident, and it made an impression on me. Some seven or eight months after, the mark was still as plain as ever, and I felt satisfied it would always remain.

“ When it was reported that you were missing, and supposed drowned, I said at once it was scarcely possible you could have fallen into the river from the nature of the bank, and the time of tide ; and firmly believing in my own mind that you were stolen and not drowned, I continued to search the country round all the rest of that day and night. I found a gang of gipsies encamped on a common near Truro ; but certainly if they had

anything to do with your strange disappearance I could not criminate them. I did not return to Tregannon till the following day—imagine my horror and grief, when I heard of my master's death.

“Three or four weeks after, your supposed body was found; with others I eagerly ran to examine it. Of the garments there was no manner of doubt—but I doubted the body. I said the limbs were not near so large, nor could I find a mark on the right arm, and I thought the hair lighter; but the Miss Tregannons and Miss Pritchard, the governess, said there was no doubt whatever about the body—whose else could it be? As to the mark I spoke of, they said that was ridiculous, no one ever remarked the thing but myself—so the body was buried as the heir of Tregannon—but I never, for one moment, believed it was the body of the lost child—I still considered you stolen, and carried off some where,

but why, I could not rightly make clear to myself. I thought of your cousin, the present false Baronet, but I could not see, what he could gain by that proceeding, while your father lived, for he surely could not calculate on the Baronet's taking poison accidentally. Sir Henry's death certainly would make him next heir; and thus in the end, I came to the conclusion, that he must have had a hand in making away with the unfortunate child; but years passing away banished all but the memory of the past from my mind. When my mother spoke to me about your strange and wonderful likeness to the late Baronet, and that there was something strange in your manner and words, and your being a nephew of Mr. Bond, I all at once became impressed with the conviction, that you would turn out to be Sir Henry's son. The sight of your features, the tone of your voice, so wonderfully similar, satisfied me I was right, and I eagerly bared your arm to see

if after the lapse of years, there should yet remain some trace of the deep cut you received when a child; and there, on the identical spot like a white thread, remains the mark I speak of, and so the Almighty in His mercy has preserved you through all, that you may defeat the villain who has usurped your birth-right."

Claude Tregannon was much moved by the deep devotion and affection Mr. Treestail evinced for his father and himself; late as it was he could not refrain from giving his anxious listener a full account of his past life, and position in the world, and the extreme difficulty, if not impossibility, of establishing his claims.

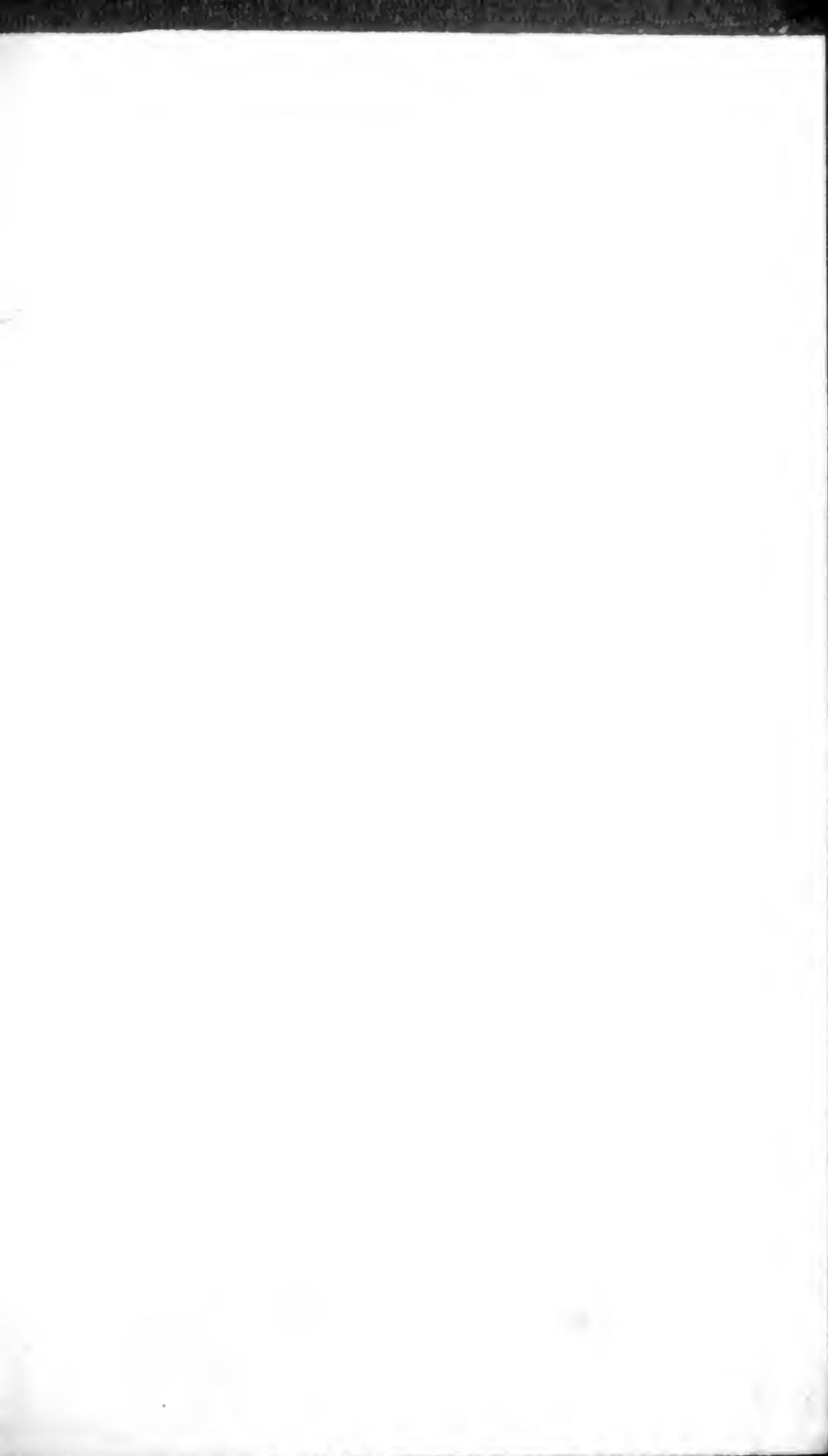
"And now, Mr. Treestail," said our hero, "we will leave till to-morrow any further disclosures and comments on this strange and complicated state of affairs, I will then let you know the project I had in view

in coming here; you can greatly assist me, and, perhaps together, we may do more than either singly. I wish—and you can see yourself the propriety of my doing so—to remain a stranger to every one, except your aged mother.”

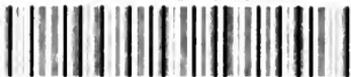
“Ah, my dear sir,” said Mr. Treestrail, “you could not deceive her, old as she is, her memory of the past is clear, and her devotion and affection too strong and sincere to be weakened by any thing you said. In her heart she knew you were Sir Henry’s lost son, and your passing yourself off for Mr. Bond’s nephew, decided the belief; but as you say, it is late; thank God I have lived to see this day, we may be baffled for a time, my dear young master, but the Lord will yet assert your rights when you least think of it. God bless you sir,” he added pressing his hand affectionately, “I have many strange thoughts in my brain now, but they are all confused; by

to-morrow I shall get them into order," so saying the honest and kind hearted Mr. Treestrail retired, leaving Claude Tregannon to his own complicated thoughts and reflections.

END OF VOL. I.



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